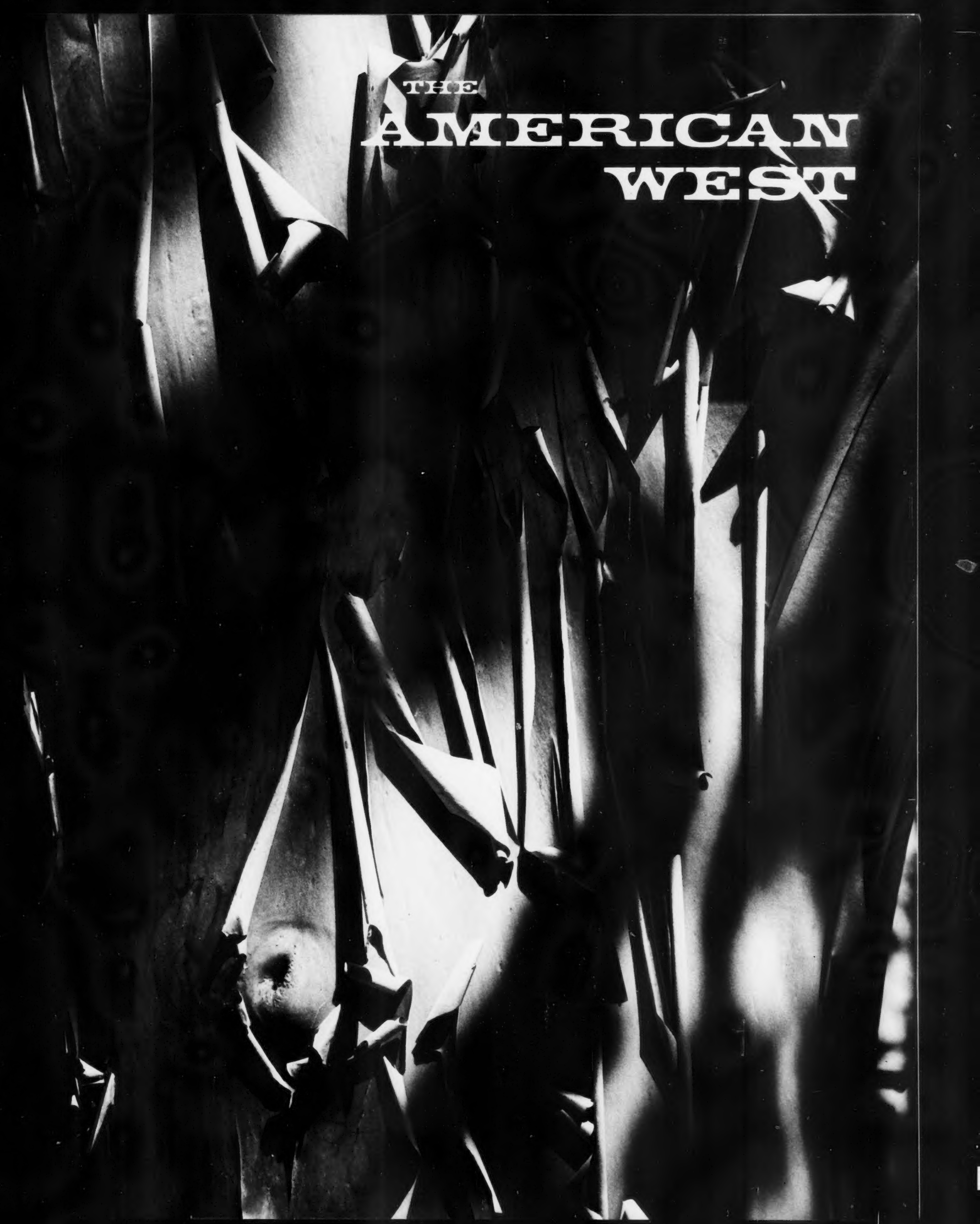
THE AMERICAN WEST



COVER: Bark peels from the trunk of a madrone tree
—an outgrown garment cast off each year.

(Photograph by Steve Crouch)

THE AMERICAN WEST

Writers and the West

A Special Issue

MARK TWAIN PAPERS, BANCROFT LIBRARY, UNIV. OF CALIF., BERKELEY

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION to this issue on writers and the West, we present the earliest known photograph of a personality destined to enjoy modest success in American literature: printer's apprentice Samuel Langhorne Clemens at the age of fifteen. Notice the composing stick and name; type usually appears reversed, but—as the ingenious youth apparently foresaw—daguerreotype portraits also are mirror images, and the word "SAM" re-reversed to come out right. Clemens' fascination with printing ultimately brought him grief, for after he became famous, he sank much of his fortune into the development of a notably unsuccessful typesetting machine.

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The View from Hawk's Tower

Poet Robinson Jeffers and the rugged coast that shaped him

by Brian McGinty

To Robinson Jeffers, the pounding surf and jagged headlands of Carmel Bay and Point Lobos were reminders of a way of life thousands of years old—as in the Sagas, or in Homer's Ithaca.

MERG ROSS

IT HAS BEEN MORE THAN TEN YEARS since the blue eyes of Robinson Jeffers last surveyed the sea from the rocky shore of Carmel Bay. The walls of Tor House and the proud tower built by the poet still stand on their rocky knoll, silently guarding the foam-flecked shore. From the road above the house, the tower seems almost to float on the sea. But the appearance is deceptive, for its walls are firmly anchored in bedrock. The house in which the poet lived for nearly fifty years sits quietly in the shadows of the tower and a dense growth of eucalyptus and Monterey cypress. Modern homes have crowded near the place in the decade since Jeffers' death, but the stones he laid have not changed, and their cool, gray strength still casts a spell over Carmel Point.

The house and tower are appropriate monuments to the life and work of Robinson Jeffers. In the storm-carved rocks is much of the quiet permanence that characterized the best of his poetry. "It was Una that wanted a tower," he once said. "I built it for her." Jeffers' beautiful and dynamic wife had, indeed, inspired the rugged stone edifice, and she inspired much of his verse as well. "My nature is cold and undiscriminating," the poet wrote; "she excited it and focused it, gave it eyes and nerves and sympathies. She never saw any of my poems until they were finished and typed, yet by her presence and conversation she has coauthored every one of them."

A short, delicate-appearing woman with blue eyes, a creamy complexion, and long bronze hair, Una Jeffers strikingly resembled a Botticelli madonna. She was married to a successful Los Angeles lawyer when she met the eighteen-year-old Jeffers in 1905. Tall and spare, with a shy manner and a faraway look in his eyes, Robinson Jeffers at once attracted Una's interest. But they were not married until 1913. Almost accidentally, they came to Carmel the following year. Jeffers remembered their arrival: "[When] the stagecoach topped the hill from Monterey, and we looked down through pines and seafog on Carmel Bay, it was evident that we had come without knowing it to our inevitable place."

They lived for a while in a rough cabin in the pinewood but often went to a low finger of land near the bay for picnics. The knoll there reminded Una of tors on Dartmoor. "At that time there were no houses," Una later remembered, "except the Reamer's and Driftwood Cottage . . . instead acres of poppies and many colored wild flowers spread out like a millefleur tapestry, and golden breasted meadow larks sang enchantingly from every lupin bush." In the spring of 1919, the Jefferses bought a parcel of land at Carmel Point, the knoll and storm-carved rocks on which they had so often picnicked. They called the place "Tor."

A contractor from Carmel Valley was hired to build a house of stone gathered from the shore. It was a modest manor modeled after a Tudor barn Una had admired in Surrey. Jeffers volunteered to help the masons build the house. He mixed mortar and carried hod on his sinewy shoulders to the slowly rising walls. A tombstone-carver in Monterey fashioned images of a unicorn and hawk which were built into the walls. There was a cold strength in the gray stone that pleased Jeffers. He wrote:

Rib of rock around a soft heart, crannies in
granite for the roots of flowers;
Waves wrestling below, winds ranging above,
Braggarts go by, the old earth is our friend,
touch nothing of ours.

A distant relative had left Jeffers a small income which enabled him to devote his time to writing. Before his marriage, he had published a slender volume of lyrics—bittersweet verses inspired by his love for Una—entitled *Flagons and Apples*. In 1916, Macmillan published a second volume of poems, entitled *Californians*. Neither book was successful, but Jeffers continued to write. He shaped his verses slowly, testing his thoughts, struggling to fashion a new instrument of spare, hard rhythm.

There was a quality to life on the Monterey Peninsula, and along the rugged Sur coast to the south, that stirred him. He later recalled that he "could see people living—amid magnificent unspoiled scenery—essentially as they did in the Idyls, or the Sagas, or in Homer's Ithaca. Here was life purged of its ephemeral accretions. Men were riding after cattle, or plowing the headlands, hovered by white sea gulls, as they have done for thousands of years, and will for thousands of

The poet and stonemason, in a 1948 portrait, contemplates sea and shore from atop his beloved tower.

N. R. FARBMAN; TIME-LIFE SYNDICATION SERVICE

years to come. Here was contemporary life that was also permanent life. . . ."

Soon after his move to Tor House, Jeffers began work on the tower. Watching the masons as they built the house, he had acquired some skill in their ancient art. Una was fascinated by Ireland and things Irish. The tower resembled many of the small fortress towers of the Misty Island, and there was in it, as well, a spiritual kinship with the timeless round towers of the Irish coast. But the building of the tower was no less satisfying to Jeffers than to his wife. He wrote verses in the mornings, gathered stones and set them in the tower's walls in the afternoons. Ella Winter wrote: "The same figure was watched by indifferent and then increasingly curious neighbors ten years ago as it hauled great granite boulders from the beach and rolled them up an inclined plane, higher and higher in the course of the five or six years Robinson Jeffers took to build his Hawk Tower. Early Carmelites recall how in those days they first wondered, then ceased to wonder, as the phenomenon took on the slow unchangeability of the cliffs and the ocean and the herons flying. You cannot wonder all of six years."

The last stone was laid in the parapet in September 1925. "[We] call it Hawk's Tower," Jeffers wrote his friend and fellow poet George Sterling, "for the sake of a sparrow-hawk that used to perch daily on my scaffolding." There were fragments of stone, given to Jeffers by friends, embedded in the walls—a carved head from Angkor Wat, a bit of stone from the Great Wall of China, green Connemara marble. There were rooms for Jeffers' twin sons and for Una, and a tiny chamber reserved for himself. It was a workroom, a retreat, a nest in the sky from which he could commune with the birds and the stars and the broad Pacific sea.

There was a curious parallel between the building of Hawk's Tower and Robinson Jeffers' development as a poet. For nearly ten years after 1916, none of his work was published, though he wrote daily. Una noted: "As he helped the

JOHN FREDERICK STANTON; COURTESY OF DONNAN JEFFERS

Tor House and Hawk's Tower, seen from the road that skirts the Carmel coastline. Today other homes crowd close by, but the stone structures still retain their sense of lonely beauty.

masons shift and place the wind and wave-worn granite I think he realized some kinship with it and became aware of strengths in himself unknown before. Thus at the age of thirty-one there came to him a kind of awakening such as adolescents and religious converts are said to experience."

Publishers would have none of his work, but by 1924 Jeffers felt confident enough to issue a collection of verses at his own expense. A New York printer prepared five hundred copies of a volume called *Tamar and Other Poems*. Review copies were sent to publishers and editors, but they excited no response, and the unused copies were shipped across the continent and stored under Jeffers' eaves. The poet sent a copy of the book to George Sterling, and another to James Rorty. Sterling and Rorty, then preparing an anthology of poems by California authors, were both enthusiastic. Rorty showed the book to Mark Van Doren and proceeded to review it in the *New York Herald-Tribune*. Van Doren wrote of it in *The Nation*. "Few recent volumes of any sort have struck me with force as this one has," Van Doren said; "few are as rich with the beauty and strength which belongs to genius alone." By November 1925 a volume entitled *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems* was published by Boni & Liveright.

There was little resemblance between the stark narratives of *Tamar* and *Roan Stallion* and the delicate lyrics of *Flagons and Apples*. The new works were dramas of intense tragedy played out against the angry coast of Carmel and the Sur. "This rocky coast is not only the scene of my narrative verse," Jeffers wrote, "but also the chief actor in it."

Jeffers had read Freud and Jung and Darwin and was keenly aware of modern scientific knowledge. And he was struck with Nietzsche's insight. "The poets?" the German had asked. "The poets lie too much." "I was nineteen when the phrase stuck in my mind," Jeffers remembered; "a dozen years passed before it worked effectively, and I decided not to tell lies in verse, not to feign any emotion that I did not feel; not to pretend to believe in optimism or pessimism, or unreversible progress; not to say anything because it was popular, or generally accepted, or fashionable in intellectual circles, unless I myself believed it; and not to believe easily."

Jeffers' new poems revealed a preoccupation with things permanent. He wrote:

Permanent things are what is needful in a poem,
things temporally
Of great dimension, things continually renewed or
always present.

He showed a disquieting sense of the transitory nature of human existence. Not only individual men, but the species itself, he saw as a passing, even ignoble, phase in the evolution of the universe. He said:

Humanity is the
start of the race; I say
Humanity is the mold to break away from, the crust
to break through, the coal to break into fire,
The atom to be split.

His reverence for nature was mystically intense. Though his faith was not institutional, he was a religious man—an exquisitely sensitive observer who "in a net of nerves catches the splendor of things." Poet, astronomer, and religious seer, Jeffers looked into space, even to the dark sea of existence beyond the farthest galaxies. In the poem "Night," he wrote of the great red star Antares:

The great one, the ancient torch, a lord among lost
children,
The earth's orbit doubled would not girdle his
greatness, one fire
Globed, out of grasp of the mind enormous; but to
you O night
What? Not a spark? What flicker of a spark in the
faint far/glimmer
Of a lost fire dying in the desert, dim coals of a
sand-pit the/Bedouins
Wandered from at dawn. . . .

JOHAN HAGEMEYER; BANCROFT LIBRARY, UNIV. OF CALIF., BERKELEY

Paying tribute to his devoted wife Una, Jeffers wrote that "she gave me eyes, she gave me ears . . . she arranged my life."

Publication of *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems* was a milestone in American poetry. Rorty later wrote: "Jeffers had matured his quantum of greatness, a quantum as large and almost as varied as that of Goethe."

THE FAME THAT CAME SUDDENLY to Robinson Jeffers had little effect on his life. He continued to write in the mornings and lay stones in the afternoons. When Hawk's Tower was finished, Una suggested the building of a dining room, on which he began work at once. A sign was hung on the gate at Tor House reading: "Not home before four o'clock." There were picnics by the shore, and trips down the coast—"pilgrimages" they called them—to the mysterious headlands and canyons of the Sur. There was no telephone in the house, no electricity, and no heat except that from two fireplaces and a Franklin stove in the loft. At night, kerosene lamps cast flickering shadows across the rough redwood walls. "It is true without exaggeration that I wouldn't drive over to Monterey to meet William Shakespeare," Jeffers wrote a friend; "this doesn't imply lack of admiration, or anything more foolish than contentment at home."

The naturalist Loren Eisley met Jeffers one day walking on the road beyond Tor House, and was struck by his lined and immobile face, his eyes that "looked at me sidelong as he spoke. . . . I have never again encountered a man who, in one brief meeting, left me with so strong an impression that I had been speaking with someone out of time, an oracle who would presently withdraw among the nearby stones and pinewood."

Jeffers and his wife twice traveled to Ireland together. The trips were undertaken at Una's suggestion, though Jeffers was charmed by the life of the cloudy island, where everything seemed dim and soft, mournful and old. And there were a handful of visits to New Mexico, made at the behest of the wealthy celebrity-hunter Mabel Dodge Luhan. Mrs. Luhan had brought D. H. Lawrence to her desert home, but the Englishman had died before completing the task Mabel had laid out for him. "I called him there, but he did not do what I called him to do," Mrs. Luhan wrote in her book, *Lorenzo in Taos,* curiously composed in the form of a letter to Robinson Jeffers. She told the Carmel poet: "Perhaps you are the one who will, after all, do what I wanted him to do: give a voice to this speechless land." But Taos could not supplant Carmel in the affections of Jeffers. "It was very interesting but very sunny," he wrote in 1930, "and we were lonesome for the ocean."

More than a dozen books followed the success of *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems.* Like their predecessors, Jeffers' later poems were stern narratives, dramatic and often cruel accounts of human tragedy. His most popular work was the play, *Medea,* which Judith Anderson brilliantly introduced in New York in 1947. But even as audiences were listening to Jeffers' inspired re-creation of the ancient Greek drama, the poet was continuing to develop his disquieting vision of the impending destruction of man. He wrote in "Signpost":

Turn outward, love things, not men, turn right away
from humanity
Let that doll lie. Consider if you like how the
lilies grow,
Lean on the silent rock until you feel its divinity
Make your veins cold, look at the silent stars,
let your eyes
Climb the great ladder out of the pit of yourself
and man.

He was not impressed by the apparent innocence and vigor of the United States, which —as early as 1925—he saw settled

in the mould of its vulgarity,
heavily thickening to empire.

But he took heart, saying:

I sadly smiling remember that the flower fades to
make fruit, the fruit rots to make earth.

Jeffers called his own vision "inhumanism, a shifting of emphasis and significance from man to not-man; the rejection of human solipsism and recognition of the transhuman magnificence." His audience was not flattered by his uncompromising views. "Man also is a part of nature," he wrote in 1942, "not a miraculous intrusion. And he is a very small part of a very big universe, that was here before he appeared, and will be here long after he has totally ceased to exist. . . ." Jeffers' message was, without doubt, a bitter pill.

Mankind had so long proclaimed its own exalted position in the order of things that it could not be expected eagerly to abdicate it. But for Jeffers the abdication was essential. Only if man turned his eyes from the looking glass could he perceive the magnificence beyond.

As the years passed, the routine at Tor House changed little. Jeffers still worked at his writing table in the mornings and laid stones in the afternoons, adding rooms to his ever-growing house. He was badly shaken by Una's untimely death, of cancer, in 1950. Ten years earlier he had contemplated the eventuality:

I built her a tower when I was young—
Sometime she will die—
I built it with my hands, I hung
Stones in the sky.
Old but still strong, I climb the stone—
Sometime she will die—
Climb the steep rough stones alone
And weep in the sky.

But he managed to function creditably without the help of his wife, on whom he had depended for so much. He was, perhaps, strengthened by the faith expressed in *Hungerfield*

Lines from Robinson Jeffers poems are quoted by permission of Donnan Jeffers and Random House, Inc.

and Other Poems published in 1952, in which he addressed his departed wife:

You are earth
and air; you are in the beauty of the ocean
And the great streaming triumphs of sundown;
you are alive and well in the tender young
grass rejoicing
When soft rain falls all night; and little rosy-
fleeced clouds float on the dawn.—I shall
be with you presently.

JEFFERS LIVED FOR A DOZEN YEARS after Una's death, continuing to lay stone and to write. As early as 1925, critical interest in his work had begun to wane, and now there were few who read his books. But he was unconcerned. Long before, he had decided the true poet should write for an audience of a thousand years from now. "If the present time overhears him, and listens too—all the better. But let him not be distracted by the present; his business is with the future."

The future was, perhaps, not so far distant. The Damoclean shadow of mankind's destruction seemed ever more present. Pollution clogged the rivers and oceans and skies. The "population bomb" ticked ominously louder. The earth itself was spared from human destruction only by a chilling "balance of terror." For Jeffers, the pattern was natural, predictable, inevitable. He had written:

I feel the steep time build like a wave, towering
to break. . . .

As a young man he had announced that he would be ready:

When the patient daemon behind the screen of sea-
rock and sky
Thumps with his staff and calls thrice "Come,
Jeffers."

He was ready—quietly asleep—when the end came on January 20, 1962, ten days after his seventy-fifth birthday.

The shore of Carmel Bay is more crowded now than when Robinson Jeffers knew it. Automobiles and homes crowd close to the stone walls of Tor. But the old house seems unconcerned behind its gray walls, wisps of smoke curling impassively from its chimney. Robinson Jeffers said that man passes, but the beauty of the world remains. Though his eyes are closed, the poet's vision endures: the grass, the shore, the high clouds blown by the wind. For in these things—the things that will never die—is the enduring splendor of the view from Hawk's Tower.

Brian McGinty *is an attorney and writer, and is presently at work on a book-length study of California's Monterey Peninsula, his home for more than fifteen years.*

Robinson Jeffers is gone, but the splendor of his poems—and of the rocky shore he knew—still remains.

STEVE CROUCH

The Deseret Alphabet

by S. George Ellsworth

SPELLING REFORM, like Mark Twain's remark about the weather, is something everyone complains about but about which almost no one does anything. Many years ago some progress toward easier reading and writing was accomplished through the work of Noah Webster, and further influence may have been exerted through the phonetic alphabets of shorthand pioneer Sir Isaac Pitman. But one of the most ambitious examples of spelling reform is today almost forgotten: the Deseret Alphabet promoted by Brigham Young among the Mormons of Utah.

Brigham Young's own spelling left something to be desired, as he knew, and in 1845 and 1852 he took classes in phonography from George D. Watt, one of the first Mormon converts from England. Watt, who had studied the Pitman system in the land of his birth, was to play a major role in the development of the new alphabet.

The chief purpose of the Deseret Alphabet was to simplify the learning of spelling, reading, and pronunciation through use of simple phonetic symbols instead of conventional letters. It was not—as some may have believed—an attempt to control the thinking of the people, nor was it a move toward isolation and secrecy. As territorial governor and church leader, Brigham Young had a special interest in such reform: he wanted to ease the process of acquiring English among the large number of foreign immigrants in Utah's Mormon population.

The Mormon leader assigned the task of simplifying the written language to the University of Deseret in Salt Lake City. Accordingly, the board of trustees named a committee which included George D. Watt. During the winter of 1853–54 the committee devised the alphabet, and within a few months type was made in the East and brought to Utah.

The new thirty-eight character phonetic alphabet was based to some extent on Pitman's phonography but in larger part upon a system of stenography suggested by Watt. The creation of most of the symbols is attributed to him, though suggestions were required from each committee member. Each of the symbols appeared in but one form: there was no distinction, other than size, between capital and lowercase letters. No cursive symbols were devised.

Implementation of the alphabet began, with some effort, in the late 1850s. Advocates of the system gave lectures and held classes of instruction. The alphabet was also taught in some of the public schools. For a time Brigham Young's ledger books, various church records, historical accounts, and some diaries were kept in the alphabet. Deseret Alphabet characters also appear on Mormon coins of the period: on one side is the beehive and eagle, on the other, the motto "Holiness to the Lord." The first text published in the Deseret Alphabet was the Sermon on the Mount, which appeared serially in the church's *Deseret News* beginning on February 16, 1859. The best-known use of the alphabet, however, was in two primers created for use in the public schools, excerpts of which appear on the facing page. The cost of producing these books was paid by the territorial legislature, and Orson Pratt was hired to transcribe material previously prepared by the committee. He supervised their printing in New York in the summer of 1868. *The Deseret First Book* and *The Deseret Second Book* sold for fifteen and twenty cents, respectively. In 1869, Pratt also supervised publication of the *Book of Mormon* in the Deseret Alphabet and the first portion of the Mormon scripture in a separate edition for the schools. But with these books the great experiment ended.

Interest in the alphabet had never been high except among those closely associated with it. The characters of the alphabet appeared awkward, the monotony of lines of type without ascenders and descenders made reading difficult, and there were certain linguistic problems. The church leadership was also aware of the prohibitive cost of printing "translations" of all books needed in the territory. But most of all, when Brigham Young died in 1877, the system lost its chief advocate. It was only a matter of time until the Deseret Alphabet became simply a curiosity.

S. George Ellsworth *is professor of history at Utah State University and is editor of* The Western Historical Quarterly. *He is the author of* Utah's Heritage *(1972).*

AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

𐑝 𐑚𐑨𐑕𐑩𐑑𐑨𐑙 𐑖𐑮𐑰𐑚𐑚𐑨𐑙.

Long Sounds.

Letter.	Name.		Sound.
𐑩	e	as in	*eat*.
𐑱	a	"	*ate*.
𐑸	ah	"	*art*.
𐑷	aw	"	*aught*.
𐑴	o	"	*oat*.
𐑵	oo	"	*ooze*.

Short Sounds of the above.

𐑦	as	in	*it*.
𐑧	"		*et*.
𐑨	"		*at*.
𐑪	"		*ot*.
𐑳	"		*ut*.
𐑫	"		book.

Double Sounds.

𐑲	i	as in	*ice*.
𐑬	ow	"	*owl*.
𐑘	ye		
𐑢	woo		
𐑓	h		

Letter.	Name.	Sound.
𐑐	p	
𐑚	b	
𐑑	t	
𐑛	d	
𐑗	che	as in *chee*se.
𐑜	g	
𐑒	k	
𐑜𐑨	ga	as in...*ga*te.
𐑓	f	
𐑝	v	
𐑞	eth	as in *th*igh.
𐑞	the	" *th*y
𐑕	s	
𐑟	z	
𐑖	esh	as in *fl*esh.
𐑠	zhe	" vision.
𐑻	ur	" *bur*n.
𐑤	l	
𐑥	m	
𐑯	n	
𐑙	eng	as in *leng*th.

𐑝 𐑢𐑩.

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𐑢𐑮𐑕, 𐑟𐑧𐑗𐑩, 𐑤𐑣𐑪 𐑡𐑧𐑴 𐑩 𐑢𐑴𐑴 𐑢𐑦𐑝 𐑗𐑝. 𐑤𐑯 𐑮𐑕 𐑢𐑴 𐑡𐑯 𐑝 𐑓𐑧 𐑐𐑝𐑤𐑛. 𐑒 𐑓𐑤𐑮 𐑕𐑝𐑟 𐑝 𐑗𐑤𐑟 𐑢𐑮𐑡𐑦𐑯 𐑢𐑑𐑕, 𐑤𐑣𐑪 𐑢𐑩 𐑗𐑧 𐑟𐑩 𐑕𐑩 𐑝𐑤𐑗 𐑤𐑴𐑛𐑦𐑯 𐑝 𐑓𐑧. 𐑒 𐑢𐑤𐑟 𐑡𐑮𐑓𐑟 𐑴𐑛𐑤𐑑 𐑝 𐑟𐑦𐑴𐑤-𐑢𐑮𐑯 𐑢𐑑𐑕 𐑢𐑦𐑝 𐑗𐑒 𐑓𐑧-𐑐𐑤𐑑𐑴 𐑤𐑣𐑪 𐑗𐑧𐑴 𐑢𐑯𐑢 𐑓𐑧.

𐑤𐑤𐑯 𐑮𐑕 𐑢𐑴 𐑡𐑯 𐑕𐑢𐑴𐑤 𐑤𐑩 𐑢𐑦𐑤 𐑩 𐑤𐑧𐑯 𐑐𐑴𐑑 𐑕𐑢𐑴𐑤 𐑦𐑐 𐑢𐑩 𐑛𐑴 𐑟𐑤𐑯 𐑗𐑧𐑴 𐑓𐑧𐑕𐑯. 𐑚𐑑 𐑝𐑴𐑑 𐑚𐑑𐑝𐑟𐑤𐑑𐑦 𐑴𐑗𐑦𐑯 𐑯𐑴 𐑕𐑢𐑴𐑤 𐑯𐑤-𐑚𐑧? 𐑟𐑴, 𐑗𐑨 𐑚𐑑𐑝𐑟𐑤𐑑𐑦 𐑟𐑧𐑗𐑩 𐑤𐑣𐑪 𐑟𐑤𐑯 𐑚𐑑 𐑮𐑤𐑑 𐑦𐑤. 𐑯𐑧 𐑴𐑤𐑟𐑯 𐑴𐑗 𐑯𐑴 𐑕𐑢𐑴𐑤 𐑯𐑤-𐑚𐑧.

By use of the key at upper left, you can read the stories in the other three boxes, first published in Deseret primers in 1868. For a complete translation, turn to page 53.

CULVER PICTURES

Mark Twain and His MISSISSIPPI

As a boy he tramped the great river's muddy banks, as a steamboat pilot he learned its every secret, and as a writer he immortalized its days of glory

by T. H. Watkins

THE QUOTATION WHICH FOLLOWS describes the homeland of a writer's heart. The book from which it is taken is *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* published in 1885. The river is the Mississippi. The writer is Samuel Langhorne Clemens, Mark Twain:

Two or three days and nights went by; I reckon I might say they swum by, they slid along so quiet and smooth and lovely. Here is the way we put in the time. It was a monstrous big river down there—sometimes a mile and a half wide; we run nights, and laid up and hid daytimes; soon as night was most gone we stopped navigating and tied up—nearly always in the dead water under a towhead; and then cut young cottonwoods and willows, and hid the raft with them. Then we set out the lines. Next we slid into the river and had a swim so as to freshen up and cool off; then we set down on the sandy bottom where the water was about knee deep, and watched the daylight come. Not a sound anywheres—perfectly still—just like the whole world was asleep, only sometimes the bullfrogs a-cluttering maybe. The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line—that was the woods on t'other side; you couldn't make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness spreading around; then the river softened up away off, and warn't black any more, but gray; you could see little dark spots drifting along ever so far away—trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks—rafts; sometimes you could hear a sweep screaking; or jumbled-up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by and by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there's a snag there in a swift current which breaks on it and makes that streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t'other side of the river, being a woodyard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres; then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh and sweet to smell on account of the woods and the flowers; but sometimes not that way, because they've left dead fish laying around, gars and such, and they do get pretty rank; and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the songbirds just going it!

In the summer of 1973 I stood on a grassy, wooded point of land near Cairo, Illinois, at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers and watched just such a dawn arrive and a day begin. It was all quite as Mark Twain described it—although his trading scows were supplanted by snuffling, grumbling, snub-nosed barge tugs and there was more a smell of diesel oil than of dead fish in the morning breeze. I was impressed at that time not only by the accuracy of Twain's description in its progression of details neatly set down, but by the living experience he had been able to convey in a few spare and simple words; it was not just the physical essence of a river morning that had been given reality but a man's deep love for it.

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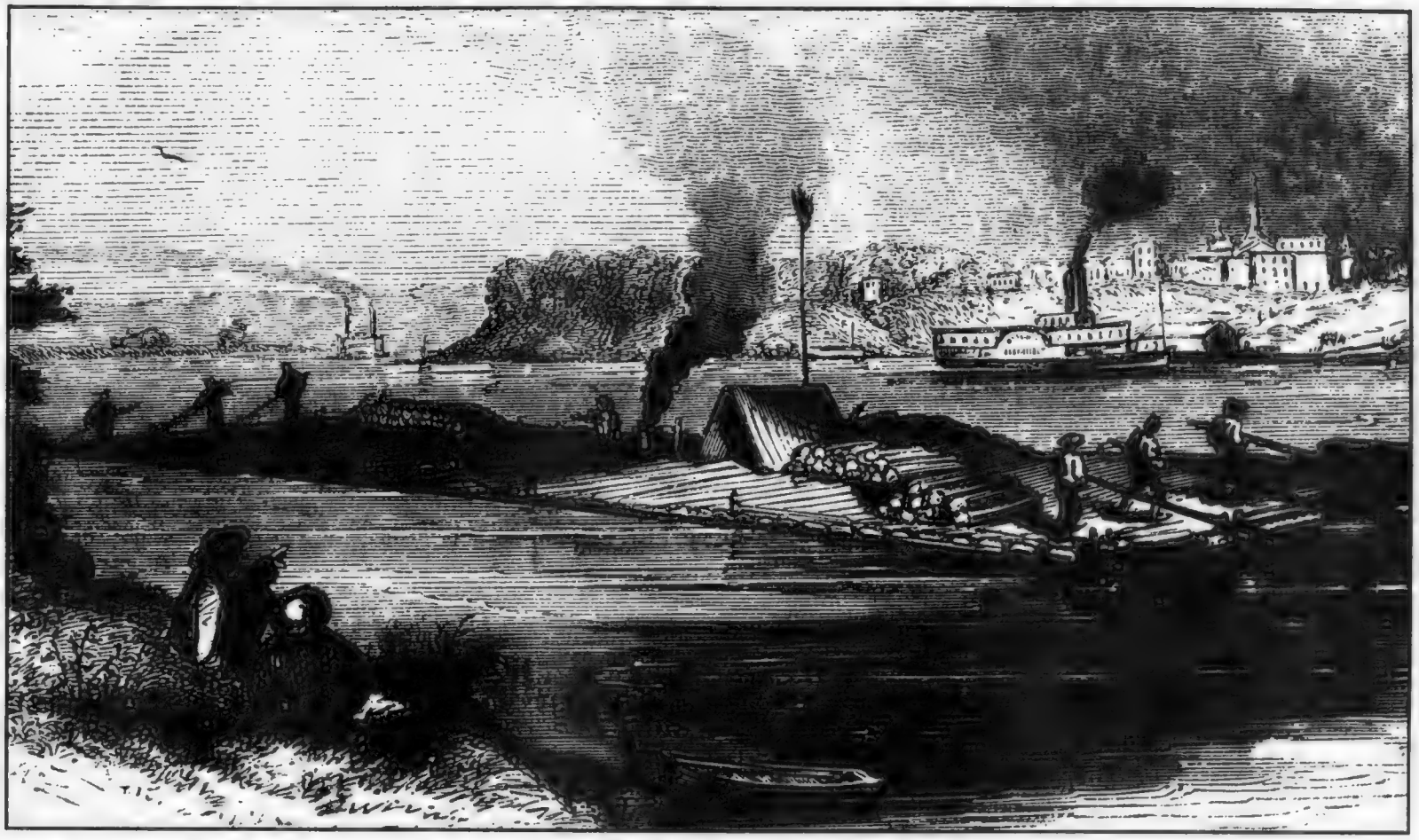

The Mississippi River that Mark Twain knew: a log raft drifts downriver toward New Orleans.

It is not given to many men to write so surely about anything, much less to sustain passion to the length of so great a book as *Huckleberry Finn*. The novel is the best of his best work, and it is no accident that it, like *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson,* and *Life on the Mississippi,* derives its strength and surety from a very specific environment: the river, the country of the river, and the people of the river. Like many another American writer (William Faulkner and John Steinbeck come immediately to mind), this greatest of American writers created his enduring work on the foundation of a landscape of heart, mind, and memory; whenever he abandoned that landscape, his work suffered, either just missing the touch of greatness, as in *The Innocents Abroad* and *Roughing It,* or degenerating into mawkish storytelling, as in *The Prince and the Pauper,* or becoming pallid, self-conscious attempts at "art," as in *The Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc.* It is a dictum older than venial sin that a writer must write about what he knows, and while Twain knew about a great many things (as he was more than willing to admit), he knew nothing so well as he knew this river and its people, and that familiarity gave us a body of literature that will endure for as long as people care to pick up books and read them—perhaps for as long as the river itself shall run.

The career of John Steinbeck, Carey McWilliams once observed, "suggests the existence of a special literary providence. For he was the right man, at the right place, at the right time." Much the same could be said for Mark Twain, for the river of his homeland was not the Kennebec, the Potomac, the Humboldt, the Colorado, or any other of the hundreds of rivers whose names have been important to the life and history of America; his river was the Mississippi, nothing less than *the* American river, just as Twain was to be *the* American writer. Providence, notoriously fickle, has rarely matched man and place so brilliantly.

First, the river: It is the overwhelming geographic fact in the eastern one-third of the United States, coursing 2,348 miles from its source in northern Minnesota to its end in a muddy, deltaic welter in Louisiana on the Gulf of Mexico; with its tributaries—among them the Missouri, the Wisconsin, the Illinois, and the Ohio—it drains an area of 1,243,700 square miles, nearly two-and-one-half times that of any other river system in the country, and at its mouth discharges an average of 611,000 cubic feet of water per second. Its watershed encompasses all or part of twenty-two of the contiguous forty-eight states, and in those hundreds of millions of acres lies some of the richest agricultural land the world has ever known.

If the Mississippi looms hugely in our geography, it is no less huge a fact in our history. From the day in October, 1528,

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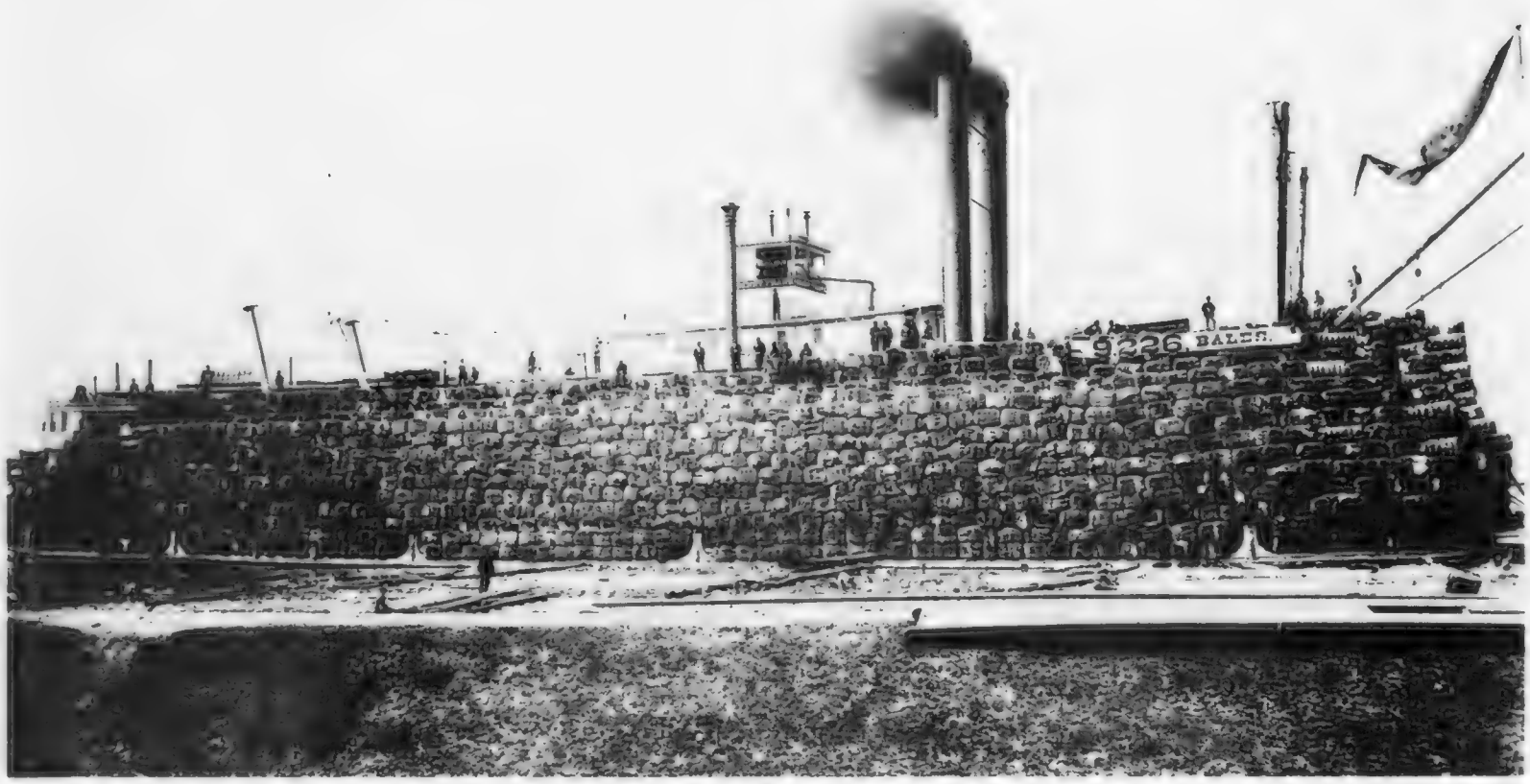
This article is adapted from material in Mark Twain's Mississippi, *to be published in the spring of 1974 by the American West Publishing Company.*

OLD COURTHOUSE MUSEUM, VICKSBURG



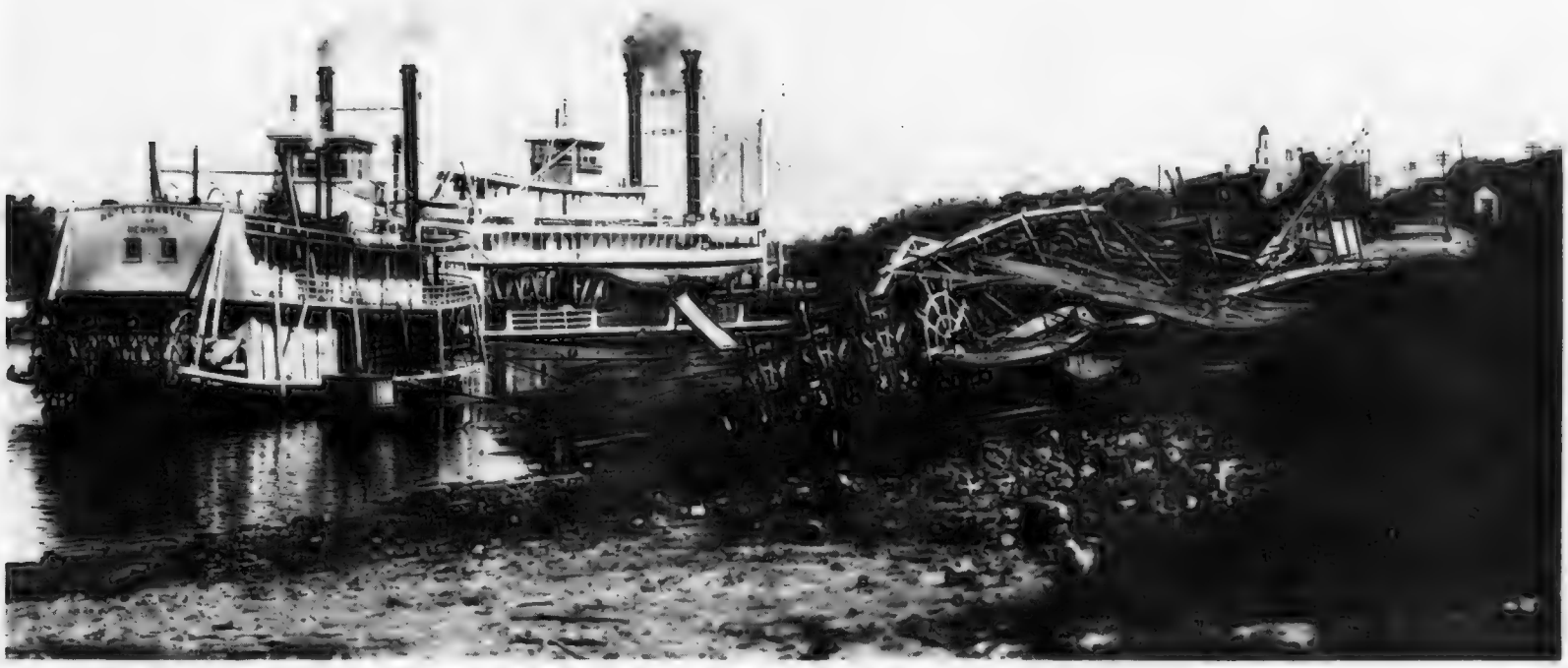
Days of glory: the steamboat "Henry Frank" with a load of 9,226 cotton bales, a record never exceeded.

when Cabeza de Vaca's desperate expedition first sighted the river's mouth to the weeks of May and June of 1973, when the river spread ruin in one more of its ancient rampages, much of the history of this country has been shaped by the algebra of the Mississippi. Its possession was the key to the interior of the continent, and four nations struggled to control it until it became an indisputably American river with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. From that time forward, the river became the chief artery of the new heartland of America.

Even before Jefferson's incredible purchase, Americans had been spilling west across the mountains, still seeking the ultimate earthly Eden of escape and promise that had driven their ancestors to cross the Atlantic nearly two centuries before. What they had found in this first, trans-Appalachian West was not Eden, but it was quite as fruitful as that fertile crescent of biblical times from which they believed all civilization had sprung. By the thousands and then the scores of thousands they filtered into the valley of the Mississippi, inexorably driving the Indians out, laying waste to whole forests, planting their farms and plantations, bickering over land speculations large and small, creating villages where there had been woods, towns where there had been villages, and cities where there had been towns, and filling the inland network of waterways with a bewildering variety of craft: with barges, flatboats, rafts, keelboats, and finally, triumphantly, the puffing, crenelated wonders called steamboats.

The period from about 1830 to the beginning of the Civil War endowed the Mississippi with that agglomeration of fact and legend that has since been held in the national consciousness as the perfect and permanent image of the river-that-was, a landscape of collective memory peopled by roistering keelboatmen and flatboatmen, who wrestled their clumsy vessels up and down the river by day and frolicked profanely in the dives and bordelloes of Natchez-under-the-hill and New Orleans by night; by sturdy, pioneering farmers who loosed the repressed passions of their Fundamentalism at riverside camp meetings; by patrician gentlemen and beautiful, white-gowned ladies who gathered on the verandahs of pillared mansions in the middle of sugar, rice, and cotton fiefdoms; by hotblooded young blades who indulged in duels with careless enthusiasm and pursued elegant fornication in velvet-walled brothels; by river pirates and grisly bandits who made the Natchez Trace synonymous with organized terror; by steamboat pilots who navigated their massive wedding-cakes-on-water through all the treacheries of the river with a combination of encyclopedic knowledge, natural skill, instinct, and brimstone profanity; by sweat-shined black stevedores and field hands who expressed the stifling agony of slavery in fitful, short-lived rebellions and in a body of music that is one of the richest legacies of America; by occasional fur trappers who wandered into the river towns, smelling of grease and far places, trading, drinking gargantually, spreading tales of wild adventure, of seas of elk and buffalo, of mountains as high as the sky; by stray Indians, riverboat gamblers,

OLD COURTHOUSE MUSEUM, VICKSBURG



Vanished glory: the broken-backed skeleton of an abandoned steamboat moulders at river's edge.

harlots, flimflam men, merchants, whiskey traders, marginal entrepreneurs of every stripe . . . a veritable stew of humanity that trembled and boiled in the transitional zone between an older, fast-settling frontier and the raw, mysterious newness of the frontier that lay immediately to the west, beyond the river and the prairie.

Whatever the reality of this national memory, it did not long survive the Civil War, which like a jolt of adrenalin accelerated the creation of a machine civilization in America. Wracked by four years of conflict, the plantation economy of the South never regained the flavor and importance of its antebellum years. The tentacles of railroad tracks crept everywhere through the valley of the Mississippi, gutting the river trade on which fortunes had been built and sounding the death knell for the steamboat era—vestiges of which, incredibly, nevertheless managed to survive well into the twentieth century. One after the other, railroad—and later, highway—bridges thrust across the river, obliterating forever its historic role as a natural barrier. Modest cities swelled to metropolitan stature, quite as cluttered, crowded, and constrained as metropolises anywhere. With the twentieth century came the wholesouled enthusiasm of the engineers, who set about to improve the Mississippi. They dredged and kept clear a major shipping channel along much of the river's course, thus destroying adventure even as they revitalized the river's role as an avenue of commerce. They built miles of levees to hold the river back from towns and farmland and built dams, locks, canals, spillways, and floodways in a mighty effort to control and even reverse the natural processes of millennia—and very nearly succeeded. Today, concretized, channelled, structured, the river lies stripped of almost any romance save that which imagination and memory can supply, left with only seasonal tantrums of flooding to remind us that it will remain long after we are gone. If a man cared to stretch for an allegory, he could see the history of America writ small in the history of this river.

IT WAS FORTUNATE FOR HIM, and fortunate for us, that Mark Twain was privileged to know the Mississippi in its glory, and to know it early enough and long enough for the river to color the spectrum of his soul. He was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens on November 30, 1835—the year of Halley's Comet—in the Missouri hamlet of Florida, some eighty miles west of the river. Four years later his father, chasing the lorelei of opportunity that always evaded him, moved the family to Hannibal, a somnolent farming village on the banks of the Mississippi a little over one hundred miles north of St. Louis. Here, in this river town of less than five hundred people, Samuel Clemens spun out the days of his youth and adolescence, his mind storing up memories and impressions like a Silas Marner raking in double eagles.

It was no grasshopper's life. The family never escaped genteel poverty under the best of circumstances, and when his

father died in 1847, young Sam was apprenticed to a printer, a position which supplied his family with much-needed income and himself with an equally desirable education. At eighteen, wanderlust struck Clemens, as it did most young men of that time and place, and he became a tramp printer for four years, drifting downriver to St. Louis, then going on to New York, then to Philadelphia, back to the river again at St. Louis and, finally, Keokuk, Iowa, where he conceived the notion of sailing off for vague adventure in South America.

South America had to get along without him, for on his way downriver to New Orleans Clemens persuaded the pilot of the steamer *Paul Jones* to take him on as a "cub" and "learn" him the river. In the next three years, as cub and pilot, he did indeed learn the river in possibly the single most intensely happy period of his life. That experience was forever after one of the talismans of his soul; the memory of it was something to be clutched at for solace and reassurance, much as he often relied upon the remembrance of his boyhood days in Hannibal. "I loved the profession far better than any I have followed since," he wrote twenty years later, "and I took a measureless pride in it. The reason is plain: a pilot, in those days, was the only unfettered and entirely independent human being that lived in the earth."

Whether he would in fact have contentedly spent the rest of his days dodging snags and calculating currents on the Mississippi cannot be answered, for the Civil War put an end to this bright new career—put an end, in fact, to his river-going days. He went west to the mines of the Comstock Lode in the Territory of Nevada and found yet another career as a reporter for the *Territorial Enterprise* of Virginia City. From there he went to San Francisco, earning a fairly comfortable niche in the circle of bohemian *literati* that infested the city. The publication of his short story, "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog," in 1865 brought him a whisper of fame, and he journeyed to New York to see if anything good could be made of it. More than forty years later, he had published twenty-one books and countless stories and articles, and he had established himself as one of the most effective lecture-entertainers of the nineteenth century. By the time of his death in 1910—again, the year of Halley's Comet—he had achieved a degree of financial, critical, and popular success that few writers have ever enjoyed in their lifetimes.

But it had been a strangely confused and rootless life, made bitter as gall by a combination of temperament and circumstance. For most of his productive life, Twain was haunted by monstrous, unspecified guilts and vexed by rages that shook him to his marrow, rages so intense they seemed almost ancestral. He was plagued by his own inconsistencies: his contempt for greed and his clamoring hunger for money, which drove him to many personal cruelties and to such fabulous money-making schemes as the notorious Paige Typesetting Machine; his instinct for skepticism and his ready vulnerability to cloying sentimentality; his stated disregard of class, respectability, and propriety and his almost constant pursuit of it; his innate sensuality and his almost hysterical prudery; his professed love of naked truth and his willingness to lie when occasion suited it; his horror for the excesses and inhumanity of the machine civilization and the fascination that pulled him to it like a filing to a magnet; his love of individual men and his hatred for "the damned human race." Death took his wife and three of his four children before it claimed him. In characteristic fashion, Twain managed to blame both himself and the universe for each death. In the end, he remained uncertain (but rarely in public) of his own genius, never fully trusting the art of *Huckleberry Finn* and frequently naming as his most important book the "refined" and purple-prosed *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*.

WHILE THE MISSISSIPPI AND ITS PEOPLE lay at the heart of his best work, Twain wrote only one book "about" the river—*Life on the Mississippi*. It is a curiously divided book, one section being almost antithetical to the other—and as such it is revealing of Twain himself.

The bulk of the first half of the book was first published as a series of articles for the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1875: "Old Times on the Mississippi." It dealt almost exclusively with his days as a cub pilot and is, as Bernard DeVoto has called it, "a study in pure ecstasy." Like *Tom Sawyer*, the first half of *Life on the Mississippi* is deliberately nostalgic and pretends to nothing else. Its artistry is sure, and its control of memory an exercise in pure craftsmanship. Taken alone, it is one of the three or four best things he ever wrote.

But it was not long enough to make a book, or so Twain thought. In the spring of 1882, he set out to "fill out" the rest of the book by journeying once more on the river from New Orleans to St. Paul. The chapters which narrate this journey are clearly inferior to the first half of the book—with such notable exceptions as his account of the revisit to Hannibal and his delineation of Uncle Mumford, one of the last of the old-time river pilots. It lacks the core of feeling that dominates the first half. It is loosely organized, occasionally flip, and frequently purely reportorial in a second-rate fashion. Parts are downright banal, some are padded outrageously, and there is a lamentable air of self-consciousness throughout—almost a kind of posturing.

The reasons for this literary dichotomy are illuminating. In 1874, when he began writing "Old Times on the Mississippi" for the *Atlantic*, Twain was still a relatively young man, relatively newly married (since 1870). *The Innocents Abroad*, *Roughing It*, and *The Gilded Age* had established him solidly in the eastern literary world, and his lecture tours were consistent successes. He was by no means rich, but he had his reasonable expectations. He had tasted bitterness in the death of his infant son and the sporadic invalidism of his wife, Livy, and had experienced the first of the many slumps that would torment his writing life, but gall had not yet overtaken him. When he set down his recollections of the river,

Revisiting the river of his youth: Sari Melchers' painting of Mark Twain in the pilothouse of the steamer "Calamity Jane."

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

his heart was still open to the innocence and joy to be found in his memory of the river-that-was.

By 1882, when Twain started on his journey to recapture the river, his life and temperament had altered considerably. The publication of *Tom Sawyer* in 1876 had been such a fiasco of mismanagement that he forever after hated his publisher, Elisha Bliss, with a passion that was gargantuan even for him. His estrangement with his old San Francisco friend and mentor, Bret Harte, had reached a poisonous stage. Problems of plot and structure in *Huckleberry Finn,* the book in him that cried to be written, had been frustrating him for more than six years. The completion of *The Prince and the Pauper* had given his family great satisfaction, and he himself considered it his first work of "art," but somewhere in his writer's heart he must have known that it was nothing less than a sellout to literary respectability, whatever that may have been. He was comparatively rich now, but he was spending money like a fool at a fire and was perpetually uncertain of security. He had made his first investment in the Paige Typesetting Machine in 1880, and already that grotesque contraption had begun to sap his energies and fortune. Altogether, Twain approached the Mississippi in 1882 as a frustrated, too often angry man whose principal concern was to get a job of work done as quickly as possible—and the second half of the book shows it.

If Twain had changed, so had the river, although he kept his lamentations for that change to a minimum. In fact, he spent a great deal of time celebrating the "progress" and "enterprise" which had transformed the river he loved. Still, the changes had to rankle him, as they did in St. Louis: "Half a dozen sound-asleep steamboats where I used to see a solid mile of wide-awake ones! This was melancholy, this was woeful. The absence of the pervading and jocund steamboatman . . . was explained. He was absent because he is no more. His occupation is gone, his power has passed away, he is absorbed into the common herd, he grinds at the mill. . . ." The river he had known and worshipped had succumbed to the industrial revolution. Like Twain himself, the river had been stripped of innocence; in this sense, in *Life on the Mississippi* as in no other of his books, the river and the man become one.

Small wonder, then, that in later years Twain looked back to the river of his youth as his one landscape of freedom and joy; the attractive thing about memories is that a man can control them, as he cannot control the world around him. We can reasonably assume that as he lay trembling on the edge of his last sleep his final images were of a vigorous young man at the wheel of a proud steamboat, bellowing orders down a speaking tube and cursing with a flash of joy in his eyes, or of a boy on a raft heading for Jackson's Island on a river where it was forever summer.

T. H. Watkins *is an associate editor of* THE AMERICAN WEST *and author of several books, including* California: An Illustrated History, *recently published by The American West Publishing Company.*

The essence of Mark Twain's Mississippi: giant steamboats at the New Orleans levee in 1853, by Hippolyte Sebron.

TULANE UNIVERSITY

WALLACE KIRKLAND; TIME-LIFE SYNDICATION SERVICE

With notebook in hand and box camera at his side, Bernard DeVoto catalogues features of a river Lewis and Clark knew.

DeVoto's Western Adventures

IN 1946 BERNARD DE VOTO was forty-nine years old. After twenty years of writing, he was identified with the Rocky Mountain West in the mind of every reader who knew his name at all. He had celebrated its scenery, defined its geographical, cultural, and mythic boundaries, scorned its limitations, re-created its history, and interpreted its legends, folklore, and emerging literature.

But the fact was, his extensive knowledge of the West was more from books than from personal experience. The only part of even the Rocky Mountain West that he knew intimately was the narrow Wasatch front, and only the northern end of that. He had traveled the Union Pacific to and from Utah several times, and there is a story, unconfirmed and by now probably unconfirmable, that as a boy he had gone with his father to Mexico. After he settled in the East, lectures had taken him to St. Louis, to Kansas, to Nebraska—all of this "back East" to his Ogden consciousness. In 1940, in preparation for *The Year of Decision: 1846,* he had followed the Santa Fe Trail into New Mexico and Colorado and had come home by way of Utah, Wyoming, Montana, and the Dakotas. He was one who prepared for travel with books and maps, and he learned as he went. Nevertheless it is true that up to 1946 he had only brief first-hand experience even of the country he had visited, and there were whole regions of the West that he did not know at all. He had not visited the Northwest, California, Texas, or Oklahoma, and he did not know even casually southern Utah, Arizona, Nevada, or any part of Idaho except the southern edge. By 1946 he had lived more years in Cambridge, Massachusetts, than in Utah. Westward he might walk free, like Thoreau, but he did so in Thoreau's own fashion—in books and in imagination, from a narrow New England base.

This acknowledged authority on the West was just completing a book on the fur trade *(Across the Wide Missouri),* without having set eyes on much of the country over which the fur trade had operated. Not from choice: he had been held back by lack of money, by the Depression, by the demands of a furious work schedule. His 1940 tour, the first in many years, had whetted his appetite, but the war and gasoline rationing had prevented any further trips. He was able to write about the fur trade with the vividness of personal knowledge only because he was an avid and intuitive reader of maps, because he was familiar with an extensive literature, and because he had a novelist's visualizing imagination and the gift of letting one thing stand for a lot. As he was fond of saying with cynical emphasis, he could make a fact go a long way. He could re-create a rendezvous on Horse Creek or in Pierre's Hole from knowing Ogden's Hole and Cache Valley. He could imagine the Absarokas or the Wind Rivers from knowing the Wasatch. He could find words for mountain light, weather, water, because they lived in him.

But those qualifications would not be enough for the Lewis and Clark book that he was now about to embark on. To present as personal experience the adventure of discovery, to trace the opening of Upper Louisiana and the groping-out of a Northwest Passage up the Missouri and across the Stony Mountains and down the Oregon to the Great South Sea demanded detailed knowledge. Before he could discover the West with Lewis and Clark he had to discover it for himself. In the summer of 1946 his personal inclinations, the end of

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This article is adapted from material in Mr. Stegner's forthcoming biography of Bernard DeVoto, The Uneasy Chair *(Doubleday and Company, © 1973 by Wallace Stegner).*

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A great historian's search for the West of Lewis and Clark and how it transformed him into an ardent conservationist

by Wallace Stegner

Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark on their great voyage of discovery, as visualized by Frederic Remington.

wartime restrictions, and the completion of two major books all coincided to let him go out after the geographical expertise that his readers assumed he already possessed.

In the midst of his usual frenzy of work—writing "The Easy Chair" for *Harper's*, finishing *Across the Wide Missouri*, arguing with the Mark Twain Estate over details that infuriated him, helping to organize the History Book Club of which he would shortly become the chief judge—he laid out lines of information in the West and arranged the magazine commissions that would have to pay his expenses. A worrier and hypochondriac, he fretted about inoculations for Rocky Mountain spotted fever and the quality of western lodging and western food. He badgered Stewart Holbrook and other western friends for help in locating a forest job for Gordon, his elder son, and a camp for Mark, the younger one. For a while he had the whole *Time-Life* organization trying to get him a new station wagon off the assembly lines that had not yet converted to civilian production. No 1846 pioneer outfitting at Independence in anticipation of the hazards of the frontier could have been more concerned.

Or excited, or willing to share his anticipations with anyone who would listen. In the April 1946 "Easy Chair" he outlined his plans and indicated that the trip would be paid for by articles in *Harper's* and "less exalted journals." These, as things developed, were *Life*, *Fortune*, and *Woman's Day*. In the July "Easy Chair," written before he left, he undertook the role of consumer's reporter, ready to test the goods and services offered the American tourist in the first post-war summer. And he lived up to his offer, in a half dozen magazine pieces. But what he really got out of the trip was something more: a personal knowledge of most of the West and a personal crusade.

On JUNE 5, with his old Buick loaded like a pack mule, Mark developing hysterical vomiting spells, Avis determined to "shame" her husband by wearing shorts, they got the doors closed on themselves and started west. Their itinerary took them to Buffalo, by boat to Detroit, across the south peninsula of Michigan and by boat again to Manitowoc, across Wisconsin and Minnesota to Pierre, S.D., the site of old Fort Pierre, built in 1832 as a bastion of the Sioux trade. There they made rendezvous with a *Life* photographer, Wallace Kirkland, who had been working upriver from St. Louis shooting Lewis and Clark sites set up for him by DeVoto. And there DeVoto's personal education began; his eye began to fall on places that had formerly been only echoing names.

Up the Missouri to Fort Clark, sixty miles above Bismarck, N.D. Thence on to old Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone, once the uppermost reach of the Missouri fur trade. Thence, going backward up Clark's return route of 1806, up the Yellowstone past the mouths of the muddy, swinging rivers—the Powder, the Tongue, the Bighorn—that in June were busy washing Wyoming and Montana toward the Gulf of Mexico. From Billings, northward to Great Falls and Fort Benton, and then on through Helena, Three Forks, Dillon, and over the Lemhi Pass to Salmon, Idaho, where DeVoto took a look at the Salmon River and scribbled a card to Carvel Collins, a friend back in Cambridge, instructing him not to try it in his foldboat. Now north again into Montana, down the Bitterroot Valley to Missoula, over the Lolo Pass that had so punished Lewis and Clark, and on to Lewiston, the Whitman Mission at Waiilatpu, and eventually to the Columbia, whose lower reaches they got to in time for a Portland Fourth of July.

Every stage of that journey was familiar to him from books,

Charles M. Russell's monumental painting of Lewis and Clark meeting the Salish-Flatheads at Ross's Hole captures the sense of

some of which he carried along in a compact traveling library; but nearly every stage was as new to DeVoto's eyes as it had been to the eyes of Lewis and Clark. It was the part of his summer journeying that would be most immediately useful to his historical writing. But there were whole empires of the West still to be seen, and what might have been pure pleasure was as usual made compulsive by the obligations he had assumed in order to pay the expenses of his historical research. Some of his articles could be generated out of the daily happenings of the road, but the *Fortune* article demanded fresh impressions of six or eight national parks, only two of which he had ever visited.

From Portland, on July 6, they drove south to Crater Lake, and on to San Francisco, and on again to Yosemite. Because he had no choice, he drove like a tourist trying to set mileage records for a two-week vacation, but he worked very hard

the land that Bernard DeVoto was seeking to portray with words.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

with his boxed library, too, fitting each new mountain range, valley, desert sink, and town into his mental relief map of western geography and his mental outline of the history of exploration and settlement. He and Avis took turns driving so that both got a chance to see. The desert in particular, that sage and greasewood waste rising in long alluvial skirts to worn peaks, all that emptiness domed with the big sky full of strato-cumulus clouds that one moment quenched the light and the next let intolerable brightness flood across great hammocked valleys and bare twisted mountains—the desert all but shocked them with its beauty, and when they drove across it at night to Salt Lake City and watched dawn and sunrise come on, DeVoto had one of his articles instantly at hand. "Night Crossing," he called it when he published it in *Woman's Day*. It was from the heart, a hymn, a poem. Here he truly came back to the West. But the freshness with which

DAVID MUENCH

Returning east across the desert to Salt Lake City, DeVoto was transfixed by the beauty of dawn on the salt flats.

the desert came to him is also an indication of how little familiar he had been, up to that time, with his chosen country, even the Great Basin desert which had been his boyhood's front yard. Coming back opened his eyes to it, half in recognition, half in surprise.

They paused in Utah only long enough to buy tires and see Chet Olsen, DeVoto's friend in the Forest Service office in Ogden. Then northward to Grand Teton and Yellowstone, and out the east entrance to deposit Mark at a ranch camp near Cody, in the Sunlight Basin, and south again to Rocky Mountain National Park, where they spent two days before making a U-turn and heading back the way they had come. South Pass, the gateway for the mountain fur trade and for the wagon trains that followed it, was something DeVoto had written about at length and had never seen.

Off the main road now, and not much visited, South Pass is one of the most impressive and deceptive places in the West. It looks like a long sagebrush saddle. But stop there and watch the cloud shadows go over, see the white rumps of antelope moving among the sage, study the braiding ruts that thousands of wagons made as they fanned out and came down the long slope from Pacific Spring. Stop there off the road (Wyoming 28) with your motor shut off, and just listen to the wind, which breathes history through bunch grass and sage, and smell the dust and distance, and look eastward up the gentle rise toward where you know are the Sweetwater, Devil's Gate, Independence Rock, and the last crossing of the Platte—landmarks receding backward toward the United States—and then turn and look west downhill toward the Green, and you can believe you understand something about the folk-wandering that moved America westward. It was DeVoto's major theme, and he wanted South Pass to speak to him. But they turned east from Farson in a dreary rain and the gray slope rising eastward was dim, the unpaved road was slick and soapy. The magic that he might have found there on a better day was not there.

So they turned away, heading north and west to Thermopolis, Three Forks, Helena, finally Glacier National Park, where their mail was awaiting them; and from Glacier DeVoto wrote to Garrett Mattingly and Robeson Bailey, calling the western tour "the best thing I ever did in my life."

And it was not yet over. Caught up on his correspondence, DeVoto turned them back south to Yellowstone, picked up Mark from his camp, and then made a great bend to the west, clear out into the Sawtooth Range in Idaho, where they rested ten days while DeVoto wrote a couple of "Easy Chairs" and straightened out his notes. Then home as the bird flies. On September 12 they were back in Cambridge, greatly enlarged.

INGVARD HENRY EIDE

South Pass, Wyoming, presents one of the most spectacular vistas in the West, but rain spoiled the effect for DeVoto.

OUT OF THAT HECTIC, ZIGZAGGING JOURNEY of 13,580 miles, DeVoto emerged with a firm sense of the outlines and relationships of western geography, a heightened feeling of how the wilderness had worked on the American consciousness, and an increased confidence about the geopolitical implications of the Lewis and Clark expedition. He also had material for considerable magazine journalism: five "Easy Chairs," two full-length *Harper's* articles, three articles in *Woman's Day*, one article in *Fortune*. The *Life* articles somehow fell through the crack and were never published, though it is Avis's recollection that three were paid for. But in addition to the journalism and the research that would pay dividends in the writing of *The Course of Empire*, there was an unanticipated benefit, or obligation. He discovered the West's present as well as its past, its problems as well as its geography. A few of the things DeVoto wrote out of that 1946 tour were controversial articles, and the controversy did not flicker out, but went on, hardly interrupted, for the rest of his life. The summer of 1946 turned him into a conservationist, one of the most effective in our history. When he finally came West in person, he came like Lancelot.

In his journalistic commentary on the West DeVoto was not an infallible witness. Writers whom he had scolded for generalizing about the frontier would have been justified in scolding him in turn for generalizing about the West, which was actually no more a unit than the frontier was. As young Arthur Schlesinger once told him, he sometimes, by an outrageous statement, gave an opponent the handle by which to pull down an otherwise impregnable argument. But at the end of the summer of 1946 DeVoto knew far more about the West, past and present, than some of his roadside journalism and horseback judgments suggested. Some of what he knew withstood not only his own second thoughts, which were often corrective in other situations, but the repeated angry challenges of those he attacked. When he talked about western land and resource use, he was talking about something he had seen, knew, and could prove. He had grown up along his Grandfather Dye's irrigation ditches, he had read Powell and Webb, and he had checked them out, now, in person. He understood the West's vulnerability, the dangers of overgrazing and the logging of watersheds. He knew exactly what it meant when he saw the Powder, the Tongue, and the Bighorn pouring their silt into the clear Yellowstone. He knew the pressures that miners, loggers, and graziers put upon the federal bureaus entrusted with the management of the Public Domain.

And in Boise, toward the end of his western tour, he had been intercepted by Chet Olsen, his friend from the Forest Service office in Ogden. Olsen brought word of the meeting

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DeVoto the scholar: for him the summer of 1946 was a time of decision leading to a new role as a conservationist.

of the American Livestock Association and the National Woolgrowers' Association in Salt Lake City, and he put copies of resolutions they had passed in DeVoto's hands, hoping that an airing in "The Easy Chair" might forestall the designs of the stockmen upon the national forests. He did better than he knew. He ignited not one "Easy Chair," but a string of them, plus articles, speeches, lectures, political maneuvers. He handed DeVoto the cause and the controversy that took precedence over all the other causes and controversies of his contentious career, the one that most enlisted his heart, conscience, and knowledge. He revived in DeVoto the Populist radical who had always been there, though sometimes disguised. He made it sure that DeVoto, who had once scorned other varieties of crusader, would himself be crusader, and not a tame one.

As early as August 3, from Bozeman, DeVoto had written Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., that he intended to do something about the "western hogs" whose mentality was "straight out of the cabinet of Ulysses S. Grant," and that he wanted to time his blow so as to do maximum harm to the legislation he and his Forest Service friends expected the stockmen to introduce. He stated his theme—a sort of brief horn solo—in "The Anxious West" in the December *Harper's*, and then in the issue of January 1947, which appeared a couple of weeks before Congress reconvened, he let go with full brass and percussion. He exposed the intentions of the stockmen in "The West against Itself," a full-length article; and in "The Easy Chair" of the same issue he gave the stockmen historical perspective by comparing them to the Mesta whose grazing practices had turned Spain into a semi-desert.

"The West against Itself" summarized western economic history—the raids against furs, metals, timber, grass, gas and oil—and the psychology and economics of liquidation that the raids demonstrated. It discussed the high interest rates, short-haul freight rates, and other methods by which eastern capital had kept the West an economic fief. He noted the reclamation and power projects and the war-stimulated industry that in recent years had given the West the hope of a self-sufficient economy. It observed that the raiders were still numerous and that many well-intentioned westerners had been duped into taking the raiders' side against themselves. It outlined the bills by which the stockmen hoped to destroy the system of federal regulation in the Public Domain and to get the Public Domain transferred to the states, where the raiders could easily get their hands on it.

Landgrab, DeVoto called it, the biggest landgrab in our history if it realized its intentions. If it succeeded, a few men would get rich and the West would be returned "to the processes of geology."

"There you have it. A few groups of Western interests, so small numerically as to constitute a minute fraction of the West, are hellbent on destroying the West. They are stronger than they would otherwise be because they are skillfully manipulating in their support sentiments that have always been powerful in the West—the home rule which means basically that we want federal help without federal regulation, the "individualism" that has always made the small Western operator a handy tool of the big one, and the wild myth that stockgrowers constitute an aristocracy in which all Westerners somehow share. . . . The great dream of the West . . . envisions the establishment of an economy on the natural resources of the West, developed and integrated to produce a steady, sustained, permanent yield. While the West moves to build that kind of economy, a part of the West is simultaneously moving to destroy the natural resources forever."

That was for openers, and it committed him. Between January 1947 and his death eight and a half years later, DeVoto wrote more than forty additional articles about the West. All but three or four of them are conservationist polemics, most of them aimed against the same interests and many of the same individuals that he named in "The West against Itself." They were the same interests that had almost got away with the Public Domain during the administration of Herbert Hoover and his Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur;

the same interests that Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot had fought in the early years of the century; the same that John Wesley Powell had challenged and lost out to in the 1890s. There are clarifications as well as discouragements in the study of history: it demonstrates with precision who the adversaries are. Always are.

DeVoto opened fire on them so unexpectedly—dry-gulched them according to their way of thinking—that the stockmen were at first disorganized, and could mount no better defense than some disparagements and vilifications in *The Stockman* and other controlled papers. The conservation organizations, though far weaker in 1947 than they were to be a few years later, filled DeVoto's mailbox with cheers and distributed his articles to members of Congress. At the end of March, when he suspended his other jobs long enough to go to Washington, Forest Service friends and Secretary of Agriculture Clinton Anderson told him that he, a private citizen, had singlehandedly stopped the landgrab cold. The Robertson Bill, its central piece of legislation, would never get out of committee.

But the forces behind the landgrab effort had money, influence, organization, a potent lobby, and their own natural allies in the meat packing industry and the United States Chamber of Commerce. Also they had other ways of skinning the West if the Robertson Bill wouldn't work. Congressman Barrett of Wyoming brought before Congress his annual bill to turn over to the Forest Service (and so expose to stronger attack) the lands of the Jackson Hole National Monument that had been bought up by the Rockefellers and presented to the National Park system. The perennial effort to log sections of Olympic National Park was renewed. And on April 17, when the stockmen had had time to regroup, Congressman Barrett pushed through H.R. 93, authorizing the Subcommittee on Public Lands, of which he was chairman, to hold public hearings in the West on the grazing policies of the Forest Service.

That was a transparent invitation for the enemies of the Forest Service to air their grievances before a congressional committee whose chairman was friendly to them and whose management of the hearings would give them every advantage. A report damaging to the Forest Service was almost guaranteed; and such a report could help get the Forest Service's budget cut and hamper or overturn its range management policies.

But in the event, Barrett's chairmanship was too friendly, and the effort to produce a pro-stockmen report boomeranged, partly because DeVoto and his conservationist allies kept the light turned brightly on the summer hearings. In Billings, several stockmen defended the Forest Service against their own organizations. In Rawlins and Grand Junction, Barrett so far ignored any pretense of impartiality that the newspapers, including the influential *Denver Post*, began to denounce the methods of "Congressman Barrett's Wild West Show." A hearing scheduled for Phoenix was hastily cancelled when it appeared that the friends of the Forest Service would make a strong showing. By the time of the last hearing, at Ely, Nevada, an aroused public and press had organized so effectively that the Barrett subcommittee went home in disarray.

With DeVoto at their heels. He had first smelled them out; he had kept their activities in the pages of *Harper's* (before the public and congressional eye); he had been denounced at their meetings and had in turn denounced them. In January 1948, one year after his opening blast against the landgrab, he summarized the whole spectacle and could report, to a public that by now looked upon him as a sort of defender of the public interest, that the committee which had set out to discredit the Forest Service had succeeded only in discrediting itself.

Coming as it did in conjunction with the publication of *Across the Wide Missouri*, the landgrab fight made DeVoto very visible not only as the historian of the West but as its defender against its enemies and against itself. As we have said neither his historical interest nor his conservationist zeal was remitted during his life. After much trial and error he had found his proper functions in history and controversy, and he had found them by rediscovering the West he had been born in, returning to it with an affection as robust as the distaste with which he had left it in 1922.

There would be other historical studies, including *The Course of Empire* and the shortened edition of the *Journals* of Lewis and Clark, and there would be other conservation battles, including the one that saved Dinosaur National Monument from the dam-builders. DeVoto broke that in a *Saturday Evening Post* article on July 22, 1950, as he had broken the landgrab in *Harper's* three and a half years earlier. He did not live to see the finish, but he lived to write dozens of articles, in every forum from the *New York Herald-Tribune* to the *Post*, from *Harper's* to *Woman's Day*. He had the satisfaction of receiving an honorary degree from the University of Colorado—the university of a cowboy state—specifically for his conservation activities. He worked six years as a member of the Advisory Board for National Parks, Historical Sites, Buildings, and Monuments. From 1946 to 1955 he made Cambridge, Massachusetts, a sort of nerve center of the conservation movement, keeping the lines open to correspondents and societies and allies all over the West. Through the second Truman administration and the first Eisenhower administration he worked closely with a dozen congressmen and senators, and in the last years of his life he was a close advisor to Adlai Stevenson on western resource problems.

Once he found the West again, it all went in a straight line. It all stemmed directly and powerfully from the summer of 1946, which was his year of decision as surely as the year a century earlier had been a year of decision for the United States—the year when he put his book-knowledge on the road and went back to meet the West face to face.

Wallace Stegner *has been associated with* THE AMERICAN WEST *through most of its existence, and for two years was its Editor-in-Chief. His novel* Angle of Repose *won the Pulitzer Prize in 1972.*

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Karl May's novels total some sixty thousand pages; over twenty-five million copies of them have been published.

The Wonderful West of Karl May

This prolific German novelist never saw the frontier he glamorized— yet his imaginative tales of "Westmaenner" have fascinated millions

by Ralph S. Walker

IN THE UNITED STATES we tend to look upon the Old West as peculiarly our own, not realizing that its glamour and violence have a romantic heritage in Europe as well, and that many of the characters who colored its vast expanses were Europeans. Years before movies and television shaped our popular images of gunmen, mountain men, and wandering cowboy knights-errant, the people of Europe had created their own versions of the same legends.

Millions of Germans dead and living, young and old, learned about the American West through the novels of one man—Karl May—who wrote his first western novel in 1875 and his last in 1910, and who himself never actually saw the American West.

A wonderful West it was indeed that Karl May painted for his readers—a West peopled with noble redskins and with bad ones (clearly delineated by tribe), with treacherous Yankee traders, with gangs of "tramps" or outlaws and wicked villains, and most importantly, with honest German-born *Westmaenner*. (May's *Westmaenner* can be literally interpreted as "westmen," but there is no exact English word equivalent. Nor does the term appear in popular German dictionaries. Hunters, trappers, plainsmen, and cowboys operating west of the Mississippi were included.)

May's was a West of great snow-covered mountains and burning deserts, of impenetrable cactus forests, of brawling frontier towns, of giant caves, of burgeoning oil fields in the plains, of magic lakes shimmering in the sun, of oases owned by feudal ranchers who were responsible only to the "law of the West," and of limitless prairies where a chance meeting would begin with a speck on the horizon and end in a running gun duel two hours later when the antagonists finally reached each other.

Except for the cactus forests, there was not much exaggeration in May's descriptions of the western landscape. But the ease and speed with which his principal characters roamed over this huge and nearly empty territory reminds the modern reader of restricted, small-scale Europe.

Throughout this wonderful West there wandered two renowned figures—two heroes in the classic sense—"Old Shatterhand" the westman and "Winnetou" the Apache chief. Old

RIALTO/CONSTANTIN FILMS

Old Shatterhand and his Apache friend Winnetou were two of May's most popular western heroes; here (played by Lex Barker and Pierre Brice) they ride across the screen in a 1967 Rialto-Constantin production of "The Treasure in Silver Lake."

Shatterhand was an illustrious German superman who could speak, read, and write forty languages, who roamed the world as a writer and archaeologist, never made a mistake he couldn't rectify, smoked cigars, and worshipped the Protestant God. He was always keener-witted than the people about him, was a better shot than anyone had even seen before, was generous to a fault, and never killed man nor beast unless he needed to, but if so forced did so without compunction or regret. Very early in his American travels, May's hero knocked a villain unconscious with his mighty fist and straightaway acquired the nickname by which he became known from Seattle to New Orleans, from San Francisco to Little Rock.

Old Shatterhand carried a marvelous short repeating rifle which had been custom-made in St. Louis by an old gunsmith named Henry. It featured a revolving chamber that enabled the shooter to fire twenty-five shots with deadly accuracy and in rapid succession. This *Henrystutzen* ("Henry carbine"), along with a very heavy "bear-killer" rifle also given Old Shatterhand by Mr. Henry, was his inseparable companion.

His *Henrystutzen* should not be confused with the Henry rifles known to every gun collector, which were made in the United States during and after the Civil War and which were adopted by some foreign governments. There is some indication, however, that May himself deliberately mixed up the two in the minds of the public.

Old Shatterhand is introduced to the reader in the very beginning of *Winnetou I* (there were also *Winnetou II*, *Winnetou III*, and *Winnetou's Heirs*) as a "greenhorn." The extent to which a clever writer five thousand miles away from an action scene can absorb from books the flamboyant spirit of the turbulent American frontier may be judged from May's description of "greenhorn," put into the words of Old Shatterhand. Actually, "greenhorn" meant an animal with young horns, thus a naive and ignorant newcomer. But May gives a different origin: ". . . a man who is still green, therefore new and inexperienced in the land and must stick out his feelers [in German, 'feel-horns'] warily if he doesn't want to expose himself to danger and be laughed at."

Old Shatterhand continues his definition in the following singular paragraph, and it is impossible to say how much May

was indulging in humor at his readers' expense:

"A greenhorn is a man who does not rise from his chair when a lady wants to sit; who greets the lord of the house before he bows to the Mistress and Miss; who on loading his rifle shoves the cartridge inverted into the barrel, or pushes first the wadding, then the bullet, and lastly the powder into a muzzle-loader. A greenhorn either speaks no English at all or a very pure and bookish English. To him Yankee English and the backwoods jargon are both complete abominations. A greenhorn thinks a racoon is an opossum and confuses a passably pretty mulatto girl with a quadroon, the daughter of a white and a mulatto. A greenhorn smokes cigarettes and detests the tobacco-spitting Sir. When a greenhorn receives a blow on the ear from an Irish paddy, he runs with his complaint to the Justice of the Peace, instead of acting like a proper Yankee and shooting the fellow down. A greenhorn thinks the footprint of a turkey is a bear track and a slender sporting yacht is a Mississippi steamer. A greenhorn is too timid to lay his dirty boot on the knee of his fellow traveler and to slurp his soup with the breathing of a dying buffalo. A greenhorn drags cleanliness onto the prairie with him in the form of a washing sponge as big as a giant gourd and ten pounds of soap. He sticks in a compass which already by the third or fourth day is pointing to all possible directions, except that it never points north. A greenhorn notes down eight hundred Indian phrases, and when he meets the first red man finds that he sent these notes home in his last envelope but kept with him the letter he meant to send. A greenhorn buys gunpowder, and when he is ready to make his first shot realizes that somebody gave him charcoal. A greenhorn has studied astronomy ten years long, but can stare ever so long at the starry skies without knowing how late it is. A greenhorn puts the Bowie knife in his belt in such a way that when he bends over the blade sticks him in the thigh. In the Wild West a greenhorn makes a campfire which blazes up tree-high, then wonders when the Indians discover it and he is shot, how they were able to find him. A greenhorn is just a greenhorn—and such a greenhorn was I at that time."

Then, naturally, the German traveler later to be known as Old Shatterhand proves conclusively in the first few pages of the book that, although he is young and has never been in America before, he is in fact no greenhorn. On the contrary, he can outshoot, outfight, outscout, and outthink any of the grizzled and hardened westmen he encounters.

The other figure who looms larger than life in the American *Travel Tales* is Winnetou, a young Apache Indian chief, educated by a Christian tutor, who possesses remarkable amounts of patience, kindness, woodcraft skills, and steely, unforgiving implacability.

European film versions of May's Westerns have been generally faithful in their characterizations, but the Indians often are blue-eyed, and romantic subplots have been introduced.

RIALTO/CONSTANTIN FILMS

Old Shatterhand was surveying a prospective railroad route across the territory of the Mescalero Apaches (without knowing he was on their land) when he first met Winnetou, the son of a Mescalero chief who was also the head chief of all the Apache tribal groups. Winnetou wore fringed leggings, a leather hunting coat, and moccasins ornamented with an embroidery of porcupine quills. A medicine pouch hung from his neck, as did a "calumet." His weapons consisted of a knife and a double-barreled rifle. He had soft light-brown skin with a tinge of bronze, and his face bore a noble mien.

On this first encounter between the two heroes Winnetou was with his father and was accompanied by his tutor (a former German revolutionary, in exile). The meeting ended in strife because of a misunderstanding and led eventually to Old Shatterhand's near-death by Apache execution, but Winnetou and the German surveyor nevertheless developed an instant liking for one another. This was later to be translated into blood-brotherhood and friendship greater than life until the day when Winnetou threw himself in front of Old Shatterhand, taking the bullet intended for him at the cost of his own life. Because of all the American episodes that took place during the life of this friendship, plus the adventures of Old Shatterhand in the Middle East (where he was famous as Kara Ben Nemsi, "Karl, Son of the German"), the final sacrifice of Winnetou must have taken place many years after his first meeting with Old Shatterhand. But in this and later novels May deliberately obscures the chronology.

A villain killed the German tutor during one of the first episodes; later the old chief also fell, making Winnetou the head chief of the Apaches, a principle of succession reminiscent of European royalty.

Old Shatterhand and Winnetou were constantly running into each other in various parts of the lawless land west of the Mississippi. The encounters were almost always unexpected and fortuitous, with one of the heroes saving the other from almost inevitable death or torture.

In America, when pressed, Old Shatterhand would state that his name was Karl or Charlie (Winnetou called him "Scharlih"), that he had been born in Germany, and that he roamed from place to place because he was interested in the customs of people and was pursuing his occupation as a writer. The *Reiseerzaehlungen*, the *Travel Tales*, feature Kara Ben Nemsi or Old Shatterhand relating his adventures in the first person. However, there are numerous other novels by May written in the third person which also feature Kara Ben Nemsi or Old Shatterhand.

All this suggests to the reader that Old Shatterhand really was Karl May, which is exactly what Karl May wanted his readers to believe. In fact, after the popularity of the Old Shatterhand stories was assured, May often told correspondents and claimed in lectures that he actually was Old Shatterhand. As a result, he engaged in bitter disputes with some who contended that he had never experienced the events and scenes he wrote about.

The author even had calling cards printed: "Dr. Karl May, called Old Shatterhand." He built a fine house in Radebeul bei Dresden and called it "Villa Shatterhand." May also had himself photographed in theatrical Bedouin and American plainsman costumes.

In the sophisticated, bitter, disillusioned world of today, it would be difficult for a dumpy man five-feet-six inches tall with a huge head to pass himself off as the matchless Old Shatterhand–Kara Ben Nemsi, who, if all his adventures were integrated into a coherent chronology, would have had to live a hundred active years. But May's expanding Europe was a romantic and gullible one—it was the era of colonization. The world beyond the continent was filled with exotic, thrilling places, and Europeans had been fascinated by the exploits of men like Richard Burton and Henry Morton Stanley.

Moreover, fabulous stories of America's excitement and promise were coming back from thousands of German emigrants. The novels of the American frontier by James Fenimore Cooper and Germany's own Friedrich Gerstaecker were enormously popular. It was a wonderful, exciting world, made for heroes. Karl May dreamed that he was such a hero and projected his dream to his readers.

THE REAL KARL MAY was born in 1842 in a Saxon village, the son of a brutal, alcoholic weaver and a chronically complaining midwife. Soon after birth he lost his sight for four years. Poor and unlovely as they were, his parents recognized talent in their youngster and saw that he got enough schooling to become a teacher. But the scars of his childhood had twisted his behavior. Young May was expelled from seminary for stealing and suffered three jail terms (one for four years) for theft and swindling.

It was while in prison that he began to dream about men like Kara Ben Nemsi and Old Shatterhand, and to write about them. Back in society, May started work immediately for a publisher of colportage books and popular magazines, and wrote lurid tales which captured the popular imagination very quickly. The first version of *Winnetou* appeared during this period.

When he began to devote serious attention to his *Travel Tales* series, the public was ready and waiting. Of the seventy or so volumes eventually produced by the author (not counting the lurid outpourings of his early writing career), at least twenty million copies have been sold in Germany alone.

May seemed proud of his "Doctor of Philosophy" degree—a worthless piece of paper bought by mail from a diploma mill in Chicago. His first visits to the Orient came in 1899 and 1900. But he never saw America until 1908 when, as a sick old tourist, he spent a few weeks in the Northeast. The closest he ever came to Indians in their natural setting was a visit to the Tuscaroras at Niagara Falls. In reality May was as much at a loss as any average tourist in strange foreign places and had little chance, and probably little desire, to test his prowess

in the Arabian desert or the American prairie.

Karl May's life was embittered by one very unsuccessful marriage (he had a better one later) and by constant copyright litigation and controversy over his novels during his later years. His last writings, ironically, have been praised by critics as his best, but they were not popular.

The episodic plots typical of May's novels reflect his early apprenticeship as a writer of serials for popular German magazines—which was where he first learned what the public wanted. No sooner are the "good" characters out of one scrape than they find themselves in another.

May's formula involved repeated use of a scenario somewhat like the following: A businessman, a rancher, or a family is victimized and terrorized by an archvillain who heads a gang of cutthroats. The gang is in league with bad Indians. During his interminable wanderings, Old Shatterhand enters the scene by chance and, true to the best principles of knight-errantry, takes up the cause of the victims. He is aided by other honest westmen, over whom he is unquestionably superior, and by good Indians. Winnetou happens onto the scene in the course of the action and without hesitation joins the struggle on the side of his blood brother. Each episode poses great peril for Old Shatterhand and those he tries to aid, but eventually the villain and his gang get their just deserts, and the rancher or banker or oil man or immigrant family is saved.

Once the reader grasps the formula, he knows about what to expect. The real interest comes from trying to outguess May; to figure out how Old Shatterhand and Winnetou will overcome the particular danger in which they and their protégés find themselves. In one typical episode, Old Surehand, another famous westman, is imprisoned by bad Indians on an island, where he awaits the stake. Old Shatterhand succeeds in rescuing him by swimming to the island in the midst of a floating clump of brush and surprising Old Surehand's guards, then swimming back to his companions with the weakened prisoner on his back, all the while hotly pursued. (Every good westman, according to May, can swim well.)

At times when following May's novels of the American West, today's reader is reminder of the fictions and exaggerations so characteristic of U.S. dime novels of the late 1800s. There is, for example, an opening scene in *The Treasure of Silver Lake:*

A typical May villain, Cornel (May's approximation of the frontier pronunciation of "Colonel") Brinkley, a dirty individual with a sharp face and red hair and beard, is traveling with his ruffian gang aboard a Mississippi River steamboat. A fellow passenger is Old Firehand, almost as famous in the West as Old Shatterhand. He is traveling incognito in an ordinary suit, but nevetheless impresses all as being a remarkable individual. Brinkley bets his companions that he will have a drink with the giant.

Earlier in the story the villain had remarked, "It would be a shameful insult to refuse a drink with us. Everyone to whom that happens has the right to answer with the knife or the pistol, and if he strikes the insulter down, no cock will crow for him."

Old Firehand of course refuses Brinkley's request contemptuously, and when the latter draws a pistol, the hero shoots him in the hand with a lightning draw from his pocket. Old Firehand's subsequent disclosure of his identity causes Brinkley's gang, with knives already drawn, to back off.

Generally, there is little quick-draw business in May's novels. The rifle is more of an activator than the revolver. Old Shatterhand, although superb in accuracy and quickness with the pistol, as he was with everything else he undertook, relied mostly on his carbine. German makers of movies from May's novels, however, have bowed to Hollywood's influence and inserted quick-draw, shoot-from-the-hip sequences.

During the 1960s a number of such films were released by the Rialto/Constantin firm, a principal stockholder of which was a publisher who also put out an edition of May's works, after the copyright of the Karl May Publishing House had expired. The films were made in Yugoslavia, often with English or American actors as well as Germans and Yugoslavs. Some of these films have circulated in this country as "B" movies, but without much success—to an American audience they lack "authenticity." They may in fact be about as authentic as the typical Hollywood picture of the Old West. But at least Hollywood didn't often have blue-eyed Indians.

May had a predilection for the combination "Old ——hand" in naming those of his westmen who are on the right side. Old Firehand's shots always did damage; Old Surehand's marksmanship was surpassed only by Old Shatterhand's. Old Shatterhand explains this tradition in *Winnetou I:* "In this fashion . . . I was furnished with a war name. That is a custom in the West. Often the best of friends don't know each other's real name."

That generations of Germans have grown up believing that every famous westerner of Wild West days was nicknamed "Old Something-or-other-hand" is possibly of minor importance in the cultural history of the world. Of more consequence is the German birth of so many of the "good guys." In addition to Old Shatterhand and Old Firehand, there were Klekih-Petra, the tutor of Winnetou; Black Tom, the famous rafter; Tante Droll, a westman who dressed like a woman; Sam Hawkens the scout, and many, many others.

There is little or no indication that any of these people spoke English with a German accent, although traces of a German accent are in reality almost never lost by Germans who learn English as a second language. Old Shatterhand, of course, having a phenomenal linguistic ear, could be expected to pick up and reproduce the exact sounds of any language, including the Indian tongues, in short order.

This linguistic precocity is only one of many indications of German superiority in May's novels. There are comic German characters, like a *cantor emeritus* wandering through the West so he can write a grand opera about heroes. But villainous, stupid Germans there are not.

Millions of German youths of the pre-World War I and pre-World War II generations devoured, and believed, the lessons of May's books. Kaiser Wilhelm II and Adolf Hitler were avid May readers, and Hitler even recommended May's works to his generals. From the German youth of the thirties a Nazi cultural minister demanded "courage, initiative, energy, longing for adventure, and the Karl May way of thinking." May was undoubtedly an important contributor to the myth of Teutonic and "Aryan" supremacy.

May was weak in chronology and history. His *Winnetou I* mixes together the Civil War, the Ku Klux Klan, the development of oil wells, and the war between Juarez and Maximilian. Historical western personages like Kit Carson, Wild Bill Hickok, and Jim Bridger are mentioned occasionally in episodes, but they never compete with the fame and glory of Old Shatterhand.

And historic Indians never compete with Winnetou. May's Indians are a universal type, the Indians of popular imagination common to this country's lore as well as Germany's. They all say "howgh" (a variant of 'ugh'), "squaw," "wigwam," and they never use the second person tense. The customs and beliefs of one tribe are the customs and beliefs of all: "An Indian who reaches the Eternal Hunting Ground without scalp lock and medicine will be received with scorn and must conceal himself from the eyes of the Happy Ones."

But exactness of history and chronology have never been a necessary quality of dramatic novels. May was creating a legendary land, a mixture of fantasy and reality, where history was a pliant tool.

Much psychological speculation about May himself has centered on the relationship between Old Shatterhand and Winnetou. Old Shatterhand was May's projection of his dream-image of himself, in his view the perfect man. Yet apparently the strong, virile westman had no interest in women; like the Hopalong Cassidys and Lone Rangers of our tradition, he never kissed women, never flirted, was as celibate as a proper monk. But he kissed Winnetou when they met, in European style.

Old Shatterhand was the ideal which German Catholics and German Protestants alike held up to their youth, and inferences regarding May's possible sexual leanings need not concern us here. May has been read not only by youths and by psychopaths like Hitler, but by generations of solid, intelligent Germans of different ages, degrees of education, and political preferences. Jew or Gentile, anti-Semite or humanist, pedagogue or demagogue, soldier or priest, they all have loved Old Shatterhand and Winnetou. Noted May fans included Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer, Karl Zuckmayer the playwright (he named his daughter Winnetou), and Thomas Mann.

Nowadays May's novels are likely to be listed in book catalogs under *Jugendbuecher* ("Youth Books"). Many German schoolboys, and schoolgirls too, still hide Karl May novels and hurriedly return to their homework when they hear parental footsteps.

The largest German book club, the Bertelsmann Lesering, has reissued many of May's most popular novels.

In Germany and France (where the *Travel Tales* are also popular) the May cult has helped inspire various "Cowboy Clubs" and "Wild West Clubs" where members may ride and rope, sharpshoot, practice the quick draw, square dance, dress in cowboy or plainsman costumes, wear Sioux headdresses, make amateur "Western" movies, learn to use American words like "greenhorn," "tenderfoot," "pardner," and "red-eye veesky," read about Calamity Jane and Billy the Kid, and watch movies of Old Shatterhand. The devotion of May's German followers has even achieved the ultimate—an annual Karl May festival.

Groups of German tourists have also organized visits to the sites of May's western novels. Along the busy highways and in the bustling cities of today's America it may be hard for them to visualize the world of Old Shatterhand and Winnetou. But a drive through the Navajo Reservation, sparsely populated with dignified, picturesque Indians, and containing some of the wildest and most colorful natural scenery on earth, would be enough to convince them that every word May wrote was true.

A few translations of May's novels have appeared in English. But they have not been popular in America, possibly because—like the movies made from them—the stories lack "authenticity" and because of the German-ness of their heroes.

Some of us have read them out of curiosity. Despite ourselves, we become engrossed in the episodes and wish the West actually could have been like that—a vast, clean, technicolor world where social issues were simple and clear-cut, where the villains always got their just deserts, where heroes were bigger than reality, and where life was always full of excitement and promise.

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A Last Laugh for Ambrose Bierce

The enigmatic life—and mysterious death—of the noted cynic, author, and "Wickedest Man in San Francisco"

NOVEMBER, said Ambrose Bierce in *The Devil's Dictionary*, is "the eleventh twelfth of a weariness." And, eleven-twelfths weary, Bierce crossed the U.S.–Mexico border in November 1913, never to be seen again.

Probably no similar mystery in American history is so intriguing as the "[1914?]" that follows reference book entries on Ambrose Bierce. Neither the disappearance of Charley Ross (1874) nor that of Judge Crater (1930) can match the now unfathomable circumstances of Bierce's seemingly well-planned decision to vanish inside revolution-torn Mexico—an end that he said "beats old age, or falling down the cellar stairs."

Some writers, including his most recent biographer, Richard O'Connor, maintain that Bierce's chief claim to fame today is the bracketed question mark after the supposed year of his death. Others balance this by insisting that at least two of Bierce's books deserve lasting fame: *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* (1891) and *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911). Henry L. Mencken, who wrote tellingly of his acquaintance with Bierce some years after the old man's last journey, eulogized Bierce as the first writer to depict war realistically, in all its horror and uselessness. Mencken, a natural disciple, also called Bierce's epigrams "some of the most gorgeous witticisms in the English language." Others, more sensation-minded, say, with considerable latitude, that Ambrose Bierce was the only journalist to be accused of contributing to the assassination of a U.S. president.

The testimony about Bierce is varied—from orotund and plentiful (such as that of his publisher and biographer Walter Neale, and his sometime friend, also a Bierce biographer, Adolphe Danziger), to fair if slightly deprecatory, and full-circle to the view that he is "unimportant," at best a mordant footnote to American literature.

But to those who faintly recognize his name and wonder about the "[1914?]" following his brief biographical entry in reference works, it is natural to ask not only "What happened to him?" but "Who was he?"

AMBROSE GWINETT BIERCE was born at a place called Horse Cave Creek in Meigs County, Ohio, on June 24, 1842. He had eleven brothers and sisters, all of them with names beginning with the letter "A"—Abigail, Addison, Aurelius, Amelia, Ann, Augustus, Andrew, Almeda, Albert, Arthur, and Aurelia. Ambrose therefore began life by hating his name (his middle name as well), and when he later began his rise to fame as "The Wickedest Man in San Francisco," he preferred to go under the name of "A. G. Bierce" and showed no dismay when someone translated this to mean "Almighty God Bierce."

Judging from his frequent writings about parenticide, Ambrose also disliked his parents—although his father, Marcus Aurelius Bierce, was a bookish man who apparently provided his children an opportunity to know something about literature and culture, both far removed from the hard-scrabbling life on an Ohio dirt farm.

At the age of eighteen, Ambrose joined the Ninth Indiana Infantry, first as a drummer-boy, and fought through some of the bloodiest engagements of the Civil War: Shiloh, Chickamauga, Murfreesboro, Franklin, and Nashville. At Kenesaw Mountain in Georgia, on June 23, 1864, he suffered a severe wound—a ball struck him in the head and became embedded among fragments of his skull. He recovered, but his brother Albert would later say, "He was never the same after that wound in the head. Some of the iron of the shell seemed to stick in his brain and he became bitter and suspicious."

A year later, Ambrose received his discharge as a first lieutenant, and after a brief time as custodian of captured and abandoned property in Selma, Alabama, traveled west to San Francisco and took a menial job there as janitor and night watchman at the U.S. Mint. He also began to write.

San Francisco in the late '60s and early '70s, when Bierce began making his career there, had a reputation as a literary, literate city. The names of Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Charles Warren Stoddard, Ina Coolbrith, Prentice Mulford, and lesser

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

Ambrose Gwinett Bierce as he appeared in 1896 —fittingly portrayed half-lost in the shadows.

by Dale L. Walker

lights such as the poet-poseur Joaquin Miller, were on people's lips. The town read its newspapers and magazines and knew its writers.

Bierce's rise, in San Francisco literary circles, to the title his protégé George Sterling gave him—"Rhadamanthus of Letters" (Rhadamanthus being the Greek judge of the underworld)—began innocently enough with contributions of scraps of verse and cartoons to such journals as the *Californian*, the *News-Letter*, the *Golden Era*, the *Alta California*, and *The Overland Monthly*. The new contributor had a knack for polished prose and stinging little quatrains, and he had an absolute genius for iconoclastic humor—sometimes in the manner of barbed observations on news and foibles of the day, sometimes deceptively cloaked character assassination, sometimes velvet-covered sledgehammer critiques of others' literary efforts. His enemies (whose legions grew in direct ratio to his own notoriety) accused him of being incapable of writing poetry or novels himself while devoting a career to mercilessly attacking such works by others.

Bierce was an extraordinarily handsome man: six feet tall, militarily erect, with reddish-blond brows, flowing blond hair and full blond beard, and penetrating blue eyes. He was almost inordinately well-groomed and clean. "Ambrose looks as if he shaved all over every day," a wag said of him.

On Christmas Day, 1871, Bierce married Ellen "Mollie" Day, the daughter of a mining engineer. Marriage, he would later declare, is "the state of condition of a community consisting of a master, a mistress, and two slaves, making in all, two." And a bride, he wrote, is "a woman with a fine prospect of happiness behind her." While both epigrams were postmortems to his own marriage, there is little reason to suppose Bierce thought differently at the time he yielded to the temptation of matrimony. The marriage was destined, for master, mistress, both slaves, and progeny, to yield little but unhappiness. "Here's to woman!" he said in one of the most memorable toasts ever offered. "Would that we could fall into her arms without falling into her hands!"

Bierce sojourned in London between 1872 and 1875, and there he sold his initial literary efforts to the magazine *Fun*, edited by Tom Hood, son of the famed "Song of the Shirt" poet. And Bierce, using the gloomy pseudonym "Dod Grile," published three books in England: *The Fiend's Delight* (1872), *Nuggets and Dust* (1872), and another with the ingenious title *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull* (1874). On the basis of his growing reputation as a satirist, he was also asked to edit a magazine called *The Lantern*, subsidized by the deposed Empress Eugenie of France and intended as an opponent journal of *La Lanterne*, edited by Victor Henri Rochefort, Marquis de Rochefort-Lucay, a violent nationalist and opponent of Napoleon III and the Second Empire. After editing two issues of *The Lantern*, Bierce was fired, legend has it, for refusing a royal command for an audience with Eugenie.

In 1875 he returned to San Francisco a few months behind Day and Leigh, two children born in England, and Mollie, who was pregnant with a third child. Daughter Helen was born in October of that year, shortly after the Bierces resumed their residency on the Bay.

Ambrose Bierce now was treated as something of a celebrity—a book writer—and began contributing to the *San Francisco Call*, the *Wasp*, and the *Argonaut*. Aside from a brief time he spent chasing the gold scent in the Black Hills, he devoted his time to freelancing, writing a newspaper column called "Prattle," and developing his craft and reputation as political, social, and literary arbiter of the city.

In 1887 Bierce was sought out by the son of one of the city's richest Comstock Lode miners, a horse-faced youngster recently booted out of Harvard University, William Randolph Hearst. Young Hearst, upon returning home from the halls of ivy, had been asked what he wanted to do and (heady with inspiration from his brief stint as reporter on the great Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*) had told his father he wanted a newspaper. George Hearst gave him one—the *San Francisco Examiner*, which the elder Hearst had purchased in 1880 to help further his political ambitions.

The reedy-voiced young Hearst had a remarkable talent for organization, and in revamping the *Examiner* to suit his own "gee-whiz" ideas of journalism (thereby revamping the entire direction of American journalism), he hired the best writers he could find and, in some special cases, went so far as to personally seek out those whom he respected most. Bierce was one of these. In March 1887, Hearst found Bierce in the latter's Oakland apartment, made an offer that Ambrose could not turn down, and hired the increasingly misanthropic writer on the spot.

Bierce was to become a festering thorn in the side of the ambitious young newspaperman, quitting Hearst's employ uncountable times—always to be wooed back. Bierce, who spoke of Hearst's "fragrance of violets voice," detested and distrusted his employer throughout their long association; but even though the younger Hearst's political aspirations were latter shattered with Bierce's aid, there is no record of any enmity on anybody's part except Ambrose's.

On February 4, 1900, a verse that could claim at least some responsibility for Hearst's political demise appeared in the pages of the owner's *New York Journal*. The occasion was the murder of William Goebel, governor-elect of Kentucky, who had been killed in a political quarrel. Bierce, following his boss's footsteps in attacking the incumbent president, William McKinley, offered this malicious quatrain to *Journal* readers:

The bullet that pierced Goebel's breast
Can not be found in all the West;
Good reason, it is speeding here
To stretch McKinley on his bier.

After McKinley's assassination twenty months later, Hearst (and to a lesser degree, Bierce) was accused of helping plant the seed of murder in the mind of McKinley's assassin, Leon Czolgosz. Czolgosz, it was said, carried a copy of the *Journal* with him when he left for Buffalo and his fatal rendezvous with the president. It mattered little to Hearst's enemies that Czolgosz had done no such thing and admitted that his twisted inspiration came directly from the preachings of anarchist Emma Goldman.

In Hearst's *Examiner*, though, Bierce's "Prattle" column won instantaneous popularity. Therein Bierce found elbow room for his flail and punished institution and individual without mercy—most often in hilarious fashion, occasionally so venomously it became obvious to many that Bierce's scathing, libelous attacks bordered on the pathological. In "Prattle" too, Bierce gave birth to the epigrams that would form *The Cynic's Word-Book* (see box on facing page).

In 1896, Hearst called Bierce to Washington, D.C., to cover the story of the Southern Pacific Funding Bill, proposed by magnate Collis P. Huntington to delay the payment of his railroad's $60 to $75 million debt to the government. Though one would imagine the capital's climate to have been deleterious to his asthma problem, Bierce liked the city (probably because of its proximity to the Civil War battlefields he had grown to revere) and decided to stay, at the age of fifty-five, to write for Hearst.

If Bierce ever admitted to any happiness before the beginning of the new century, in all probability it was in reflecting on his Civil War days. Despite the horror he described so eloquently in his stories of the war ("An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," "A Horseman in the Sky," "Chickamauga," and others), there is little doubt that, like many an old warrior, he longed for the excitement and turmoil of battle, of the hard camp-life, of tests of courage and the chance to demonstrate valor (which he defined as "a soldier's compound of vanity, duty and the gambler's hope").

But whatever happiness he had in recalling his soldier's life of thirty-five years earlier, the new century opened for him with tragedy and disillusionment. Until the end of his life, the passing years piled on disappointment and disenchantment.

Bierce's marriage to Mollie Day had been a failure from the start, and his two sons—Day and Leigh—seemed destined to follow a dismal path. Day broke away from the fold early, in 1889 at the age of sixteen, to try his hand at reporting on a small newspaper in Red Bluff, California. That same year he became involved in an adolescent love-triangle that resulted in Day's killing the husband of the girl he loved, and then himself. The tragedy effected no reconciliation between Bierce and Mollie.

Leigh Bierce followed his father east and went to work on the *New York Morning Telegraph* (its sports section edited by William Barclay "Bat" Masterson). Leigh, like his father, developed into an "eminent tankardman"; but whereas his father was never known to be drunk, despite the quantity of alcohol he consumed, Leigh's uproarious binges became legend, even on booze-soaked Park Row. After one such bout with the bottle, Leigh developed pneumonia and, on March 31, 1901, at the age of twenty-seven, he died.

Walter Neale, a close friend of Ambrose Bierce and his pub-

lisher, said the writer's hair turned white a few weeks later.

In April, 1905, just before their divorce decree could be granted, Mollie Day Bierce also died—of "heart failure."

Bierce carried on his work for Hearst, despite his frequently stated disgust for his employer's favorite journalistic hue—bright yellow. Then, in 1909, Bierce retired to edit his *Collected Works,* a twelve-volume publishing venture that was to prove a paste-pot-and-scissors failure, despite the occasional glimmer of literary gold that could be found among the dross. "Fardels of heartache, burdens of old sins, luggage sent down from dim ancestral inns," Bierce had written in an earlier book. "And bales of fantasy from No-Man's Land."

In 1912, the *Collected Works* completed, Bierce began to plan an appropriate final chapter to another work—his own life story.

He planned, to begin with, to revisit the battlefields of his youth. He spoke too of wanting to make a trip, on foot and burro, across the cordilleras of the southern Andes, starting out from Santiago de Chile, entering western Argentina, and ending up in Buenos Aires. It was a fantastic notion for a man of seventy, but as late as September 1913 he wrote about the South American trek, to be made *via Mexico:* ". . . if I can get through without being stood up against a wall and shot as a gringo. But this is better than dying in bed, is it not?"

To his publisher, Walter Neale, Bierce spoke almost longingly of finding death in some remote place—the vastness of Grand Canyon or the Yosemite Valley. But the word *Mexico* recurred in his final correspondence and conversation more than the name of any other place.

He left Washington in June 1913 and returned to California where he spent the summer. In September he returned east, stopping off at Bloomington, Illinois, to visit his daughter Helen and to leave some papers for safekeeping. On September 13 he wrote his niece Lora, "Yes, I shall go into Mexico with a pretty definite purpose, not at present disclosable. . . . You must forgive me my obstinacy in not perishing where I am."

Then he moved on to Washington and from there southward, visiting the Civil War battlefields he had known nearly a half-century earlier. On October 24 he stopped in New Orleans, where an enterprising reporter interviewed him and quoted him as saying, "I'm on my way to Mexico because I like the game . . . there are many things that might happen between now and when I come back. My trip might take several years, and I'm an old man now."

To his daughter he wrote, "Why should I remain in a country that is on the eve of prohibition and women's suffrage? In America you can't go east or west any more, or north; the only avenue of escape is south. . . . I'll take some letters of introduction with me and strike the border near El Paso. It will be easy enough to get along. I'm going to buy a donkey and hire a peon. I can see what's doing; perhaps write a few articles about the situation; and then pass to the

Drops from a Venom-Dipped Pen

Nowhere is Ambrose Bierce's disenchanted–and witty–view of mankind more evident than in *The Cynic's Word Book,* later expanded into *The Devil's Dictionary.* (His first, incomplete volume of definitions contained only words beginning with the letters *A* through *L.*) A sampling of typical Bierce epigrams follows:

Abstainer: A weak person who yields to the temptation of denying himself a pleasure.

Acquaintance: A person whom we know well enough to borrow from, but not well enough to lend to. A degree of friendship called slight when its object is poor or obscure, and "intimate" when he is rich and famous.

Childhood: The period of human life intermediate between the idiocy of infancy and the folly of youth –two removes from the sin of manhood and three from the remorse of age.

Cynic: A blackguard whose faulty vision sees things as they are, not as they ought to be.

Enthusiasm: A distemper of youth, curable by small doses of repentance in connection with outward applications of experience.

Future: That period of time in which our affairs prosper, our friends are true, and our happiness is assured.

Money: A blessing that is of no advantage to us except when we part with it.

Year: A period of three hundred and sixty-five disappointments.

West Coast of Mexico. From there I can go to South America; cross the Andes and ship to England. This fighting in Mexico interests me. I want to go down and see if these Mexicans can shoot straight."

By late October, Bierce had pushed on to San Antonio where he was feted at Fort Sam Houston by an old army friend. By November 6 he had arrived in Laredo, jumping-off place for the revolution, and from here he wrote to his niece: "There is a good deal of fighting going on over the Mexican side of the Rio Grande; but I hold to my intention to go into Mexico, if I can. In the character of an innocent bystander, I ought to be fairly safe, if I don't have too much money on me, don't you think? My eventual destination is South America; but probably I shall not get there this year."

In another letter that day, Bierce wrote, ". . . Nuevo Laredo opposite (on the Mexican side), is being held by Huertistas, and Americans don't go over there. In fact, a guard on the bridge will not let them. So those that sneak across have to wade (it can be done almost anywhere), and go at night. . . . I don't know where I shall be next. Guess it don't matter much. Adios, Ambrose."

Perhaps a month later, Bierce crossed the border at El Paso into Juarez and journeyed by rail to Chihuahua City, arriving there on December 16, just a few days after the town became occupied by the soldiers of Francisco "Pancho" Villa. On Christmas Eve, Bierce wrote to J. H. Dunnigan, an acquaintance, "Pray for me—real loud."

The last word anyone heard from Bierce was a letter, dated December 26, that he sent to his former secretary Carrie Christiansen in Washington. On orders from Bierce, she destroyed the letter—along with most of his other correspondence—but she noted its essence: "Trainload of troops leaving Chihuahua every day. Expect next day to go to Ojinaga, partly by rail."

Only silence follows.

MANY YEARS AFTER BIERCE DISAPPEARED, H. L. Mencken wrote: "When, grown old and weary, he departed for Mexico, and there—if legend is to be believed—marched into the revolution then going on, and had himself shot, there was certainly nothing in the transaction to surprise his acquaintances. The whole thing was typically Biercian. He died happy, one may be sure, if his executioners made a botch of dispatching him—if there was a flash of the grotesque at the end." Death, Mencken said, was to Bierce "not something repulsive, but a sort of low comedy—the last act of a squalid and rib-rocking buffoonery."

Bierce did indeed often speak of his belief that a person sometimes reaches the point when he should not wait for death to seek him out. In an essay in *The Shadow on the Dial* (1909), for instance, he argued, "The time to quit is when you have lost a big stake, your fool hope of eventual success, your fortitude and your love of the game."

After the letter Carrie Christiansen is supposed to have received from Chihuahua City on December 26, there is no *real* trail to follow. The battle for Ojinaga (across the U.S. border from Presidio, Texas, 125 miles northeast of Chihuahua City) started on January 1, 1915, with Villa's forces, commanded by General Ortega, taking severe losses for the first six days. On January 7, Villa himself arrived on the scene, and by January 10 the federal garrison at Ojinaga, about four thousand men, had slipped across the Rio Grande for internment in the U.S. As Tom Mahoney believes (and states in his article on Bierce in the February, 1936, *Esquire*), Bierce may have joined the Villistas in the Ojinaga battle as an observer and been killed. Mahoney believes Bierce's body, along with those of many soldiers, burned in open cremation and that therefore there were no remains.

Prof. Haldeen Braddy of the University of Texas at El Paso, a long-time student of Bierce and his disappearance, says Mahoney's version of the story is "by all odds the most exciting," but adds, "The great advantage of this report over all others is that it successfully removes any possibility of a *corpus delicti*."

Many months after Bierce's last message, his daughter Helen appealed to the U.S. State Department for help in locating her father. Gen. Frederick Funston, in charge of army troops in Texas, was instructed to conduct an investigation into the matter, but this effort turned up nothing of value.

After Venustiano Carranza succeeded the deposed Victoriano Huerta in the Mexico City government, Carranza's investigator, a Maj. Gaston de Pridu, showed Bierce's photograph to many officers in General Ortega's Ojinaga detachment of Villa's army. One man, Capt. Salvador Ibarra, identified it and said Bierce had accompanied the Ortega forces to Ojinaga but that he did not know what happened to the American after that.

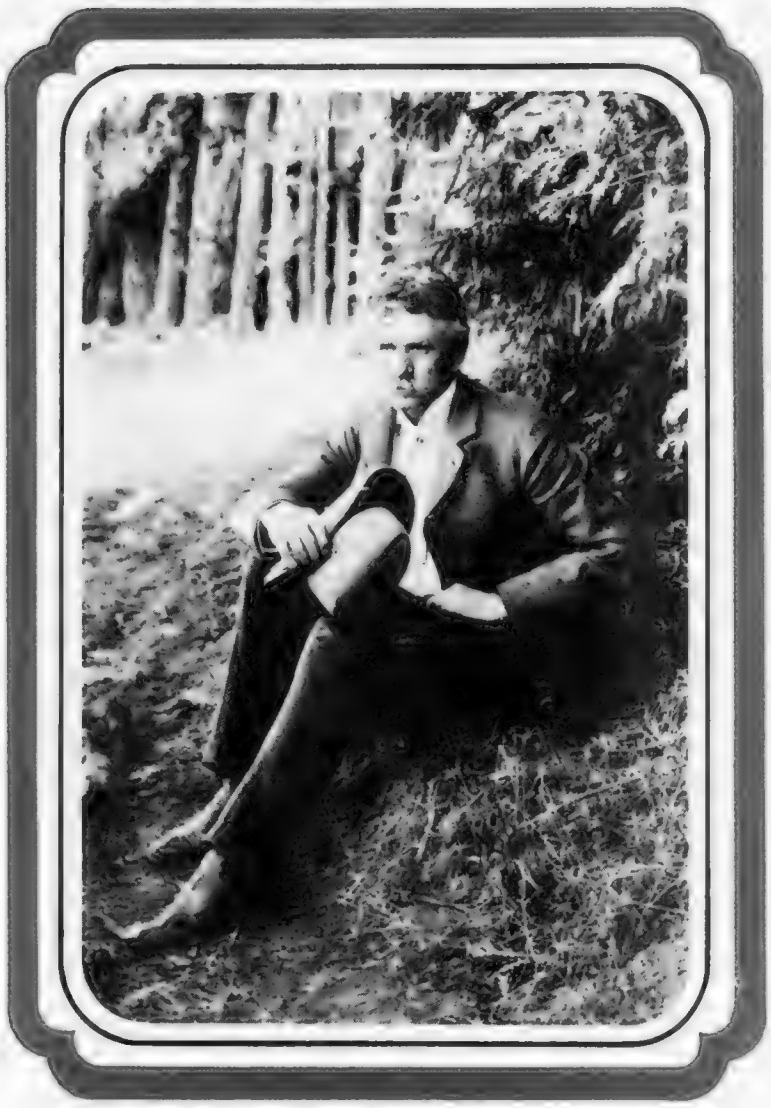
Of all the many strange and tortuous "leads" that cropped up after Bierce vanished, none is stranger than the story that appeared in the *New York Sun* in the spring of 1915. The *Sun* reported that Helen Bierce, in Bloomington, Illinois, had received a letter from her father which said he was a member of the staff of Lord H. H. Kitchener, then England's war minister, and that he had seen front-line duty in France.

The only particle of evidence connecting Bierce and the great British field marshal is that, biographer Richard O'Connor claims, Bierce began a correspondence with Kitchener in 1899 when the Boer War broke out in South Africa.

The *Washington Post*, on April 4, 1915, asked Helen Bierce to let them publish a facsimile of the "letter" and she allegedly refused. On December 2, 1916, Helen Bierce wrote to Walter Neale stating, "How my father would have enjoyed this European War!" It was scarcely a statement that Helen Bierce would have made had she believed—or in fact, received—the astonishing revelation about her father. Neale himself said he was never able to confirm the existence of the letter.

Still another far-fetched rumor, published in *The Bookman*

HISTORICAL PICTURES SERVICE, CHICAGO



Bierce in traveling clothes; in November 1913 he crossed into Mexico, never to be seen again.

in August 1925, placed Bierce in Lincolnshire, England, in the beginning months of the war in Europe, and said he was training with British soldiers at that time and that he died later in battle on the French front.

It is difficult, of course, to visualize the 72-year-old Bierce training with soldiers in Lincolnshire and being thrown into battle on the French front, as it is to see him on Kitchener's staff—or in Pancho Villa's army. The Kitchener-Lincolnshire hoax is on a par with the rumors that Bierce spent the last years of his life in a lunatic asylum at Napa, California, attended by his "faithful secretary," George Sterling, and perhaps only a step above the story that circulated in April 1932 in Buenos Aires. This one quoted an explorer named Johnson as alleging to have met "in the unexplored jungles of the Matto Grosso of western Brazil, with a strange white man who has long-flowing white hair, and who is clad in jaguar skins." The Buenos Aires report went on, "He is being held as a prisoner by a tribe of Indians who look on him as a god, and have mounted a guard to see that he does not escape. This strange man gave me letters which we lost in our wanderings in the forests. I think he is the lost American writer, Ambrose Bierce."

He may have been, but Ambrose would have to have been exceedingly lucky to survive in the heat and disease of the Matto Grosso up to the age of ninety!

Certainly the most intriguing new theory on Bierce's disappearance is that of the San Francisco writer-publisher Sibley S. Morrill. Morrill, in his 1972 book, *Ambrose Bierce, F. A. Mitchell-Hedges and the Crystal Skull,* places Bierce and the British adventurer as intelligence agents in Mexico during the Revolution and couples them with the fabled crystal skull of the Maya.

Of all the stories, the most credible placed Bierce in Mexico at the time of his death. These versions vary only in *how* he is supposed to have died:

In one account, correspondent George F. Weeks interviewed one Dr. Edmundo Malero of Mexico City, who claimed he knew Bierce well. Malero stated that Bierce originally had joined the Villistas in Chihuahua but deserted to the Constitutionalists (Carranzistas) camp and had later been captured by Villista General Urbina near the town of Icamole, about 110 miles east of Torreon. Bierce, said Malero, was executed and buried in a shallow grave. Dr. Malero, according to Weeks, is said to have later brought one of Urbina's lieutenants to Weeks to confirm the story. The lieutenant is supposed to have identified a photograph of Bierce and confirmed Malero's account.

Another version was proposed by Dr. Adolphe Danziger de Castro, with whom Bierce collaborated on the book *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter* (1893). Danziger was in Mexico in 1922 and said he talked with Villa at Villa's great Canutilla rancho, near Chihuahua. Villa reportedly became greatly annoyed when Bierce's name was mentioned but proceeded to tell de Castro the story: Bierce was in Chihuahua when the town was captured and the *viejo Americano* got drunk and criticized Villa and his men. Pancho thereupon ordered Bierce expelled from the state and later arranged to have Bierce ambushed, killed, and left to the vultures.

Prof. Haldeen Braddy interviewed de Castro in 1929 and, says Braddy, "He was not at all certain that Bierce had actually been murdered at Villa's command." De Castro, in his *Portrait of Ambrose Bierce* (1929), implies that the old man's death was probably hastened by excessive drinking.

Of all the various accounts placing Bierce with Villa, the most credible is that of Elias L. Torres, a Mexican mining engineer, writer, and brother of a governor of one of the Mexican states. Torres wrote of Bierce in the book *20 Vibrantes Episodios de la Vida de Villa,* published in Mexico City in 1934. The author, in the episode titled "El Chiste de la Muerte" ("The Joke of Death"), says he (Torres) interviewed Villa at the rebel general's huge Canutilla ranch and that Pancho admitted knowing Bierce well, saying the old man was a frequent visitor to the Villista camp and at Pancho's dinner table. More importantly, Villa told Torres the circumstances of Bierce's death.

According to Torres, Villa claimed that Bierce, during a

Continued on page 63

the people who have vanished

Text by Donald Pike

Photographs by David Muench

ON A BITTERLY COLD DECEMBER DAY in 1888, two cowboys chasing strays through the tangled canyons and mesas above the Mancos River in southwestern Colorado broke out along the rimrock to let their horses rest and get their bearings. Under leaden skies a veil of light snow swayed and pulsed with the wind's tentative currents and eddies, obscuring the riders' view of the canyon below and adding to their growing conviction that this was the wrong day to be out looking for anything. But even as they rested, a decisive draft pushed between the canyon walls, sweeping the falling snow aside to reveal what looked like a stone house—no, several stone houses—tucked back into a huge recess in the cliffs.

There, standing silent and protected under the cap-rock in a natural amphitheater that eons of seeping water had carved out of the cliff face, stood a complex of rooms and towers, bound together in a single mass of shaped and fitted sandstone that rose, curved, dipped, and squared with a grace and delicacy that seemed to mask its sheer bulk. The two men had heard their Ute neighbors talk about Indian relics to be found on the mesa, but they weren't prepared for this.

They made their way down a steep ravine on improvised ladders and then climbed up the broken talus slope to stand at the foot of their discovery. Scuffing the undisturbed dust of centuries, they probed along the front of the buildings, past small windows that stared vacantly back at them. Inside the buildings they found several skeletons, clay pots, a stone ax, and sundry discards of a hasty departure. But still they couldn't be sure what kind of a place they had discovered. All they really knew was that a people of considerable accomplishment had lived here once—and had vanished.

What Richard Wetherill and Charlie Mason had found that winter day was just one of many prehistoric Indian ruins, all long abandoned, that dot the Mesa Verde. Ironically, perhaps, their first find—dubbed Cliff Palace—proved ultimately to be the most impressive example of the Mesa Verde people's architectural skill; its discovery was the first step in a long and mystifying search for a vanished and forgotten people.

What these people called themselves will probably never be known, for they left no written records, but early investigators quickly adopted the name the Navajos used: *Anasazi*, "The Ancient Ones." So nebulous a name was of small comfort to scholars, but it proved a big enough handle on which to hang seventy-five years of research and analysis by scores of scientists seeking to understand and explain the culture it described. The task is not yet finished, but the skill and dedication brought to bear on the puzzle have yielded some tantalizing clues.

THE ANASAZI were builders and settlers on a large and permanent scale, and it is for this that they are best remembered. At a time when other Indians of the Americas huddled under fragile shelters of skin or bark, the Anasazi were erecting massive apartment dwellings and cities of shaped sandstone; while others wandered endlessly hunting and gathering a precarious existence from whatever nature chose to offer, the Anasazi planted and tilled fields, harvesting and storing crops to see them through the year; while others spent their whole lives in a struggle for mere survival, the Anasazi found enough leisure time to pursue creative arts and a highly formalized religion. The permanence that they saw in their lives was reflected in the homes they built—strong edifices that in some cases have stood for a thousand years; but for reasons not yet completely understood, their civilization lacked the durability of their buildings, and eventually the Anasazi abandoned their homeland and their way of life.

The Anasazi culture began in what we know today as the Four Corners region, where the states of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona come together at a common point. It is high plateau country stretching in all directions, a broken and rolling landscape that rises in abrupt sandstone mesas jaggedly carved by the deep-cutting Colorado, Little Colorado, and San Juan rivers. The southern reaches of the plateau, down into west-central New Mexico and east-central Arizona, are dotted with the extensive lava flows and cinder deposits of ancient volcanoes.

This article is adapted from material in Anasazi: Ancient People of the Rock, *to be published in the spring of 1974 by the American West Publishing Company.*

Betatakin Cliff Dwelling, Navajo National Monument, Arizona.

Winter at the Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado.

Moisture is not abundant on the plateau, and with the exception of the large permanent rivers that pass through, water collects only at the higher altitudes. Moisture-bearing clouds come from the southwest, borne on winds from the Gulf of California, and are pushed up to pour their contents on the high mountains and mesas. There the water forms seasonal streams or seeps through the porous sandstone to collect and emerge as tiny rivulets.

This pattern of rainfall has dictated in large measure the kinds of vegetation to be found on the plateau. At the lower elevations, where water is scarcer, sagebrush and juniper prevail, while the better-watered land above six thousand feet harbors piñon and pine. Here and there, an area favored by peculiar circumstances of moisture or temperature breaks the pattern, creating a small concentration of normally high-altitude flora, like Douglas fir, at an unlikely low altitude.

The same conditions of precipitation that influence plant life had a profound effect on early man in the region. Water is probably the single most important commodity in the arid Southwest, and the earliest Indian settlers clustered close around the rivers, springs, and high plateaus that promised enough water to nurture crops.

The Anasazi found water and built their civilization near the center of the plateau immediately surrounding the Four Corners, within the drainage basin of the San Juan River. In this region they concentrated in three distinct and vigorous population centers: Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde, and Kayenta. Anasazi settlements eventually spread across the entire plateau, and the influence of their culture affected the lives of almost every other prehistoric civilization in the Southwest, but these three centers would remain the most striking examples of what it meant to be Anasazi.

The Anasazi at Chaco Canyon, southeast of Four Corners, were the first to attain great heights of cultural development. In the broad, long alluvial valley carved by seasonal waters of the north fork of the Chaco, they built Pueblo Bonito—eight hundred rooms covering more than three acres and reaching four and five stories in places, nestled close against the sheer cliffs of the canyon wall yet entirely freestanding. All along the canyon floor stand the ruins of other sizable pueblos, most no more than a twenty-minute trot apart, suggesting the existence of a loosely related city-state that numbered its population in many thousands.

Northeast of Four Corners is Mesa Verde, where the Anasazi erected stone structures in the caves that sculpt the walls of the myriad canyons. Occasionally they built freestanding pueblos in the open but never with the care and enthusiasm they lavished on the cliff dwellings. On top of the cliffs, on the expanse that inspired a Spanish explorer of uncertain identity to name the region "Green Table," these early Indians planted and tended their fields.

Among the rugged canyons and twisted ridges that rise toward Navajo Mountain in the southwest quadrant of the Four Corners is the Kayenta region, where Tsegi Canyon is probably most typical of Anasazi architectural achievement. Here the builders worked their craft both in the caves, as at Betatakin, and in the open, as at Keet Seel, where the two types existed almost side by side. For reasons not precisely clear, the masons of Kayenta never reached the excellence of execution that marks the work of their kinsmen to the north and east.

THE ORIGINS OF THE ANASAZI are unknown, but there are some indications that their ancestral roots were distinct from the Cochise culture that preceded other southwestern prehistoric civilizations. The Anasazi tradition itself can be divided into two parts: the earlier Basketmaker and the later Pueblo cultures. In the San Juan region the Basketmakers have been traced back to about the time of Christ, but beyond that point there is little to indicate what they were like or where they came from. A hopeful blank space is still left at the beginning of most archaeological chronologies, indicating that *some* people must have been there—but no one knows who.

The Basketmakers were so named, logically enough, because of the fine basketry they produced. For the most part they lived in caves, or in shallow pit houses roofed over with branches and sticks and heaped with earth to make them at least marginally weatherproof. From about A.D. 1 to A.D. 500 they ranged across the San Juans, dividing their time between hunting and cultivating a yellow flint corn.

About the year 500, the Basketmaker pattern of life began to evolve in new directions. The modifications were evolutionary rather than abrupt, and their timing varied from place to place throughout the San Juans; but generally speaking, the mood of change was upon the Basketmakers. They were becoming more sedentary; they constructed their pit houses more elaborately and for greater permanence; they grew to depend more on agriculture; and they began to build the circular, subterranean ceremonial rooms that would become rigidly formalized as *kivas*. They also began to produce pottery, a craft they apparently learned from neighbors to the south. Toward the end of this period, about A.D. 700, minor physiological changes also began to appear: the heads of some Basketmakers became more rounded, suggesting an influx into their society of another people altogether.

This supposition is strengthened by giant leaps that the Basketmakers made up the cultural ladder at about this time. In the short span of two hundred years—between A.D. 700 and 900—Basketmakers became Pueblos, building their first masonry structures. The bow and arrow also appeared, cotton weaving was introduced, full-grooved axes suddenly came into use, and the practice of strapping infants to rigid cradle-boards came into vogue.

Whatever the cause for change, the new Pueblo Anasazi found a tremendous stimulus in it, for refinements in their cultural patterns multiplied dramatically during the ensuing years. Between A.D. 900 and 1100 they built some of their most impressive dwellings (Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon is typical of the era), raised pottery craftsmanship and decoration to hitherto unknown levels, indulged in a variety of handicrafts, devoted an enormous amount of energy to their religion and to the construction of enormous kivas, and spread their influence across the entire Southwest—with certain tendrils of their civilization reaching as far as southwest Texas and Nevada. The Pueblo culture spread almost intact into the region of the upper Rio Grande River and crossed the Mogollon Rim to the mountains and deserts of central and southern Arizona to become, with slight modifications, the Salado and Sinagua.

For two hundreds years following this phenomenal flowering, the Anasazi consolidated their gains and settled down to enjoy the good life they had wrought. Between about 1100 to 1300 the Indians built their largest pueblos and crafted pottery in its most advanced forms. Some might argue that the Anasazi had ceased to grow and that a culture that does not grow must necessarily die. The question as it relates to this people is largely moot, though, because in about A.D. 1300 the Anasazi began to abandon their homes—and in some cases the plateau altogether—thereby leaving us yet another puzzle to decipher.

Two plausible explanations exist for their departure from a homeland where life had been full and satisfying: either nature had ceased to be generous, and they were starved out, or they were driven out by intruders. There are strong indications that a severe drought extended over the platau from A.D. 1276 to 1299, and quite possibly the Anasazi found agriculture as they had come to depend upon it impossible. There are subtle inconsistencies in this theory, however, that tend to give more credibility to the second possibility. Wandering Athabascan hunters, raiders by nature, had begun to roam the plateau

Overleaf: Ruins of Keet Seel, Navajo National Monument, Arizona.

somewhat earlier, and it seems possible that these Athabascans had begun to make part, or most, of their living by preying on the fields of the sedentary agriculturalists. If this was the case, the Anasazi would eventually have been forced out. Whatever the answer—and it may have been a combination of both possibilities—the Anasazi departed for other regions.

Where they went is also a muddled question, but certainly some decamped to the upper Rio Grande region, and others possibly went to form or join the pueblos at Hopi and Zuñi. But whatever their destinations, the Anasazi—in the process of moving—lost or seriously eroded the purity and vitality of their culture.

THE ANASAZI ARE ONLY PART of a greater, often interrelated story of southwestern prehistory, which finds two other cultures—the Mogollon and Hohokam—exerting tremendous influences upon the people of the San Juan.

The mountain country of the Southwest that lies between the plateau and desert, curving like a scimitar from central Arizona to south-central New Mexico, was the ancestral home of the Mogollon culture. The Mogollon peoples began to develop a sedentary life-style several hundred years earlier than the Anasazi, building with stone, firing pottery, crafting better tools, and practicing religion more intensely. Quite possibly it was their example, picked up through trade contact, that accounted for the Anasazi cultural explosion in about A.D. 900. In time the Anasazi culture began to absorb and overshadow Mogollon ways, until by about 1000 the Mogollon had ceased to exist as a distinct tradition.

Further south, in the desert along the drainage basin of the Gila River, the Hohokam developed a culture parallel to that of the Mogollon. The Hohokam evolved as masters of irrigation, turning river waters to their crops through extensive canal systems. They were also the cultural conduit through which the trinkets, tools, and ideas of Mexico found their way north to the Anasazi. It was the Hohokam influence that resulted in the distinctive Salado and Sinagua cultures which developed during the golden age of the Anasazi.

WHAT EXACTLY DID Richard Wetherill and Charlie Mason find in December of 1888? The task of finding out has often been frustrating and confusing, and the question isn't yet completely answered. But in the decades that have elapsed since their discovery, an extraordinary amount of information has been squeezed from the dry and lifeless remnants of the Anasazi culture. The methods that have evolved for reading the story the Anasazi left behind are almost as extraordinary and ingenious as the accomplishments of the ancient builders themselves.

The primary tool of the archaeologist is stratigraphy, the study of strata, or levels, of earth and artifacts laid down in the course of a people's presence in one spot. The task is to pick through layers of junk trampled underfoot or tossed on the trash heap, and from this examination to determine the relative sequence in which certain layers were acquired, improved upon, and finally transcended by other items. The study extends to remnants of structures, tools, jewelry, clothing, food, pottery, and any other item that has not decayed. Such work is based on the assumption that people don't normally dig down into the garbage to throw something away, and that with only occasional exceptions what is found on top is the most recent, what is found on the bottom is the oldest.

The shortcoming of stratigraphy is that its measurement of time is relative and not absolute. Digging down may reveal that clubs were replaced by other types of weapons, but it won't tell the investigator *when* this replacement occurred. Two other methods have been developed to bridge this gap—radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology. The first, a product of the nuclear age, functions because the amount of radiation emitted by carbon 14 (an element contained in all living things) diminishes at a regular rate once that organism dies. Thus, by measuring the amount of radiation emanating from a sample, the approximate date of its death can be determined.

An even more exact method of absolute dating is dendrochronology, or the study of tree rings. Trees respond to the environment, particularly to the moisture available from year to year, very sensitively—and this response is directly reflected in the layer of growth added each year. Scientists have found that different trees will show the same relative response to climate; thus determining the period when a tree was alive becomes a matter of tracing the sequence of tree rings back through a series of overlapping samples. It took a number of years to trace tree-ring dates back to the time applicable to a study of the Anasazi, but today a beam from an ancient structure can be dated for the year it was cut—which narrows the margin of error in dating a ruin considerably.

Pottery, too, has assumed a role of considerable importance in the evaluation of the development, spread, and influence of vanished Indian cultures. This is due in part to the fact that a great many examples of pottery have survived either intact or with enough pieces close by to reconstruct them. Southwestern pottery becomes a useful tool in research also because different prehistoric groups made pottery differently and chose to decorate 20 to 30 percent of their vessels with distinctive paints, slips, and glazes.

Such studies are slow and difficult, riddled with conditional conclusions, but scientific techniques have helped immeasurably in unlocking the fascinating secrets of the Anasazi—The People Who Have Vanished.

Donald Pike, *a former staff writer for the American West Publishing Company, is coauthor of the American West books* The Magnificent Rockies *and* The Great Northwest.

David Muench *is a leading western scenic photographer. His recent pictorial volumes include* Timberline Ancients, Colorado, Arizona, *and* Utah.

Long House, Wetherill Mesa, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado.

A Matter of Opinion

"The Second Tragedy at Wounded Knee": A Reader's Comments

TO THE EDITOR:

In reviewing and analyzing "The Second Tragedy at Wounded Knee" (THE AMERICAN WEST, September 1973), Clyde Dollar finds it useful to interpret the actions of the American Indian Movement as reflecting a reappearance of the character and behavior of the earlier warrior society of the Teton Sioux, as reported by eighteenth-century travelers and explorers. He finds parallels between these reported behaviors and those shown by the AIM leaders at Wounded Knee, and from this expresses concern that "anachronistic tribal cultural behavior patterns" are resurfacing, to the detriment of progress for the Native American.

I am not in a position to evaluate the validity of the reports of earlier explorers, and for purposes of this comment will accept the reports of the behaviors of the AIM leaders at Wounded Knee as reasonably accurate. But as a social psychologist, I sharply question the validity of assuming that whatever behaviors were shown there can be most reasonably interpreted as the reemergence of cultural patterns characteristic of eighteenth-century Sioux. To do so fails to give proper accounting for the behavior of the majority of the Sioux nation in the present era, nor does it seem to recognize more probable bases for the behavior at Wounded Knee, bases grounded in tne particulars brought to that situation, the views the participants may have had of themselves, or the manner in which the developing circumstances invited particular behaviors from those present.

Given a highly frustrating situation, pent up hostilities, limited experience with confrontation and negotiation, and vague and vacillating notions of the specific goals sought, the behaviors which Dollar attributes to the AIM leaders seem predictable. Quite possibly their perception of the behaviors of other recent activist groups, and their perceptions or misperceptions of the past behaviors of the warrior Sioux may have suggested patterns for their own behavior. But this is a far cry from representing a reemergence of a long past cultural pattern.

Many studies have documented how the dynamics of an existing situation influence behavior in that situation. When Phillip Zimbardo placed healthy, normal Stanford University students in a situation where they were encouraged to view themselves as prison guards, their behavior toward other students posing as prisoners quickly became so punitive and vicious that the study had to be hastily discontinued. Yet no one has suggested that this emerging viciousness represented an outcropping of a dormant cultural pattern. There are countless examples, across many cultures of behavior in circumstances similar to those at Wounded Knee which suggest that there was nothing particularly culture-specific about the behavior displayed by the AIM leaders.

The concept of "national character" has had a mixed history in the social sciences. At best it may describe some relatively predictable features of the behavior of a group who share a common cultural identity at a point in time. At worst, it can be called into play to provide an oversimplified, and too often fatalistic "explanation" for a given pattern of behavior. Given the considerable cultural discontinuity between the circumstances of the Teton Sioux of the late eighteenth century and the Sioux of today, to use alleged behaviors of the distant past as a basis for explaining those of the present is reckless. One need not take either a favorable or an unfavorable attitude toward today's Native American to suggest that the behaviors ascribed to the Indians at Wounded Knee are most parsimoniously attributed to the immediate dynamics of the situation, and the interpretation of that situation by frustrated, inexperienced participants. To invoke some notion of a return to a past cultural pattern is uncalled for from the evidence, and by inviting a perception of some basic cultural tendency antithetical to constructive relationships with the Anglo world can do considerable harm to the cause of today's Native American.

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Member, Committee on the Native American, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.

A MATTER OF OPINION *is provided as an open forum. Contributions from our readers are invited, but should be limited to 750 words and must be signed.*

Alaska and Its Wildlife

REVIEWED BY TED C. HINCKLEY

UNLIKE MOST OFFERINGS from the seemingly endless stream of well-illustrated, popularly-written Alaska books, *Alaska and Its Wildlife* has no pictures of tottering totem poles, nor descriptions of gold-hungry prospectors ascending Chilkoot Pass. Its content is exactly what its title purports. Author Bryan L. Sage has given special emphasis to the wildlife of the Arctic, and readers unfamiliar with Alaska's Arctic Slope (that most remote of lands north of the Brooks Range), as well as the state's flora and fauna, will learn much from his pen and photographs. Particularly well-done is Sage's tight summary of the region's perplexing physical geography.

Alaska and Its Wildlife by Bryan L. Sage *(Viking, New York, 1973; 128 pp., illus., map, index, $14.00).*

Coffee-table books, of which this attractive 128-page volume is one, provide a healthy response to television ephemera. With dozens of superb color and black-and-white pictures, a reader can enjoy either a cover-to-cover consumption of *Alaska and Its Wildlife,* or, if he prefers, he can nibble at its lucid narrative, relaxing with a few insightful pages on Alaska's ubiquitous moose or her breathtaking profusion of wildflowers. Enlightenment and certainly escape are assured by such an exercise. Best of all, unlike TV, the bound photo-documentary does not disappear but remains on the shelf to edify its owner when next he decides to transport himself to an Alaskan wonderland.

It is reassuring to learn from the narrative that Alaska's sea otter, once threatened with extinction, now numbers in excess of thirty thousand animals. A photographer's delight, this captivating creature when not feeding or sleeping will be grooming itself. Considering that its life depends upon the condition of that remarkable pelt, this should come as no surprise. Sage's book is full of other word-and-picture surprises: musk ox on Nunivak Island; America's two largest national forests located in Alaska, and one, the Chugach, in the south-central region, having its topography "substantially altered by the earthquake of March 1964"; and Prudhoe Bay with an air temperature of –30° F, but subject to a polar wind that can suddenly drop temperatures three times below this figure.

During 1969–70, author-photographer Sage was employed by the British Petroleum Company. His assignment: report on North Slope ecological change. A year later he returned to the Arctic and assisted in the making of a film on the ecology of the tundra. Author of a number of books and several hundred articles on natural history, Sage is part corporate reporter, part scholar. His prose provides a perspective that mixes touches of romance with the hard truths of reality. No doubt about it, John Muir would have appreciated the company of Bryan Sage. The author recalls, for example, one encounter with a short-tail weasel:

"One hesitates to anthropomorphize the behavior of animals but on occasions it becomes difficult to avoid doing so. This was one such occasion and I am convinced that that weasel was deliberately playing a game. At one stage I had my gaze (and camera lens) fixed on the mouth of a burrow from which I anticipated it would emerge, only to look down and find that it had come out of a hole between my feet and was standing upright with its front paws on the toe of my boot, its tiny black eyes fixed on mine with an unwavering gaze for just an instant before it vanished again."

Pure preservationists no less than raw exploiters probably will not be happy with the author's opinions about restrained utilization of Alaska's resources. Quite rightly ecologist Sage is disturbed by such Alaskans as the civil official who in 1970 commented that the state is so big "that even if industry ran wild we could never wreck it." The author realizes that the pressure of limited global resources makes it virtually inevitable that in the not-distant future this enormous land's coal, copper, tin, platinum, and iron—no less than the black gold of Prudhoe Bay—will be tapped. "There is a need for the greatest and most imaginative land-use plan ever conceived anywhere in the world," he states. To accomplish this "will require imagination, great foresight, bravery and a revolution in attitudes on the part of all concerned, but particularly at the government level." Given the slow-moving nature of America's representative institutions and the traditionally exploitive philosophy inherent in the frontier mentality, one can only wonder if Sage expects the millennium.

The volume contains the routine historical over-generalizations. For example, we are informed that following Alaska's turn-of-the-century gold rushes the territory "returned to oblivion." In fact, gold mining and especially salmon canning continued to turn a handsome profit long after these legendary stampedes ended. Well before the Great Depression, full territorial status was achieved, Anchorage was born, and even a university was spawned. Albeit, Sage's conclusions on Alaska's bountiful potentialities are of value to any social scientist seeking data on the forty-ninth state's generous but limited resources.

Ted C. Hinckley *is professor of history at San Jose State University and is author of* The Americanization of Alaska, 1867–1897 *(1972).*

Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860 by Richard Slotkin *(Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., 1973; 670 pp., biblio., notes, index, $25.00).*

REVIEWED BY JOHN R. MILTON

BEGINNING WITH THE ASSUMPTION that "printed literature has been from the first the most important vehicle of myth in America," Richard Slotkin examines certain portions of the literature produced in America from the Indian War narratives of the seventeenth century to Thoreau and Melville in the nineteenth century to support his view that "the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience."

The basic materials in this study are personal narratives, histories, and tracts, with an occasional poem and novel. Central to the book's concern is the study of some American heroes — Benjamin Church, Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Leatherstocking, Ahab, and Whitman's woodchopper — these heroes presumably being the index to our national character.

While it may be argued that the myth has undergone changes since 1860, as well as being strengthened by genres such as the popular western novel and motion picture, Slotkin emphasizes the *formation* of the myth within areas of religion, society, and economics in the period of the early frontier. However, he stops at a crucial point, and he omits major works of literature from the West of 1830 to 1860 as well as from the period beyond his set limitations.

In effect, he is using eastern frontier literature and not that of the West. There is no Josiah Gregg, no Lewis Garrard, no Francis Parkman, no Lewis and Clark, and, strangely, no mention of Frederick Jackson Turner whose own concept of American character as based on the frontier experience is difficult to ignore. It would seem that Slotkin has come "loaded for bear" in order to make a currently fashionable indictment against the American character, an indictment with political overtones.

Yet, who can deny that the wilderness is dirtied with used-car bodies, that buffalo and Indians were destroyed by the greed of New World Europeans, and that we still engage in wars? There is a good deal of truth in Slotkin's thesis, and there are many provocative supporting analyses throughout his book. On the other hand, perhaps tedious documentation is no longer necessary to prove an American glorification of killing and the destruction of the land as it was crossed in a kind of conquest. And perhaps it is unfair to suggest that these characteristics are wholly American rather than a part of human nature or a part of the Course of Empire of the past two thousands years and more.

In short, *self-transcendence* and *regeneration* — terms arising from Slotkin's approach to myth — may not be entirely appropriate as the full explanation of violence and its justification within the American character. It may be that the cart of myth has, in this study, run away with the horse of experience.

John R. Milton *is professor of English at the University of South Dakota and editor of the* South Dakota Review.

This Country Was Ours: A Documentary History of the American Indian by Virgil J. Vogel, foreword by Sol Tax *(Harper & Row, New York, 1972; 473 pp., biblio., appens., index, $12.95).*

REVIEWED BY MARY GORMLY

THIS COUNTRY WAS OURS is probably one of the most important books dealing with the history of the United States to appear in many years. The true story of the Indian has remained a largely unknown one. Many history texts have ignored Indians; in others they have been treated as objects to be studied or as savages because they were barriers to the development of the country — but very rarely have Indians been viewed as people who have something of value to contribute to our culture.

Now it is time for the American Indians (or, as they prefer it, the native Americans) to speak out — and a time for whites to listen. Dr. Virgil J. Vogel, associate professor of history at Mayfair College, Chicago, has done an excellent and thoughtful job in selecting material to emphasize the contributions native Americans have made to this country.

The text is divided into historical periods with an introduction to each section that summarizes the role of Indians during that period; documentation follows that relates to important events or conditions. This material includes treaties, government papers, travelers' accounts, and writings and comments by Indians themselves. The range is immense: from Cabeza de Vaca and Las Casas to Dick Gregory and the Kennedys. Often two sides of a dispute are presented: for example, documentation on the Battle of Wounded Knee includes both Black Elk's account and President Harrison's official report. The last chapter, "The Indians in Perspective," is quite important as it covers such things as "Liberty and Authority Among the Indians," "Indian Influence on Frontier Life," and other related topics. All too often, as pointed out by this material, the white man's treatment of the Indian has been characterized by ignorance, prejudice, and downright cruelty.

Appendices covering such data as important dates in Indian history, famous Americans of Indian descent, agencies concerned with Indians, museums relating to Indians, and an extensive bibliography further enhance this volume and help to make it a major source book. It is also an excellent introduction to Indian-white relationships, and should be read by all Americans interested in or working with native Americans. Government officials, especially those of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, could profit from it. After all, "the country was theirs," and we should be aware of that fact.

Mary Gormly *is a reference librarian at California State University, Los Angeles, Her specializations are the American Indian, anthropology, and Latin American studies.*

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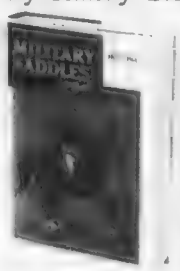

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Photographs of American Nature by Edwin Way Teale *(Dodd, Mead, New York, 1972; 296 photographs, no folios, notes, $17.50).*

REVIEWED BY ROBERT MICHAEL PYLE

THE OWL ON THE COVER and the fritillary frontispiece qualify author/photographer Edwin Teale far better than would additional testimony laid upon his healthy heap of acclaim. Fresh praise is hard to find for this Burroughs Medal- and Pulitzer Prize-winning super-naturalist, who has enriched us by several natural history classics. For his latest volume, Teale has selected a quarter of his published photographs and added forty more which have never before been published. The predictable result is a truly stunning compendium which spans the full conceptual and geographical breadths of Teale's living America.

Not just an amorphous potluck, this black-and-white banquet is in itself a masterful composition of integrated forms: A condition true of each photograph, as well. From the rich and greatly varied matrix, several distinct themes and patterns emerge. *Juxtaposition* of subjects as disparate as Craters of the Moon and the rain forest, a Joshua tree and a Monterey cypress tools the imagination. *Sequence* evokes a sustained and building reaction when used for moods of Walden Pond and the author's famous insect garden; moments in a beehive; a polyphemus moth emerging, and a sunflower opening. The artist creates a sensation of *chance encounter* to heighten our awe, when the process was probably much more one of patience than luck. *Fantasy* and gentle phantasmagoria appear discretely, in creature forms on the beach and in an insect gallery of mug shots. Then too there is a sense of history and occasion, some shots being momentous or documentary rather than spectacular or singular, such as a very few of the photographer and of places associated with naturalists he admired.

The impact extends over a range of effects, clearly separating the pretty from the exquisite. Teale's birds vary from just-good mallards to an incomparable snowy owl. His flowers seldom rival Porter's, and his dunes may be the lesser beside those of Adams. But he sets his own equally uncontestable watermark when it comes to insects. In fact, I do not hesitate to rate as best-in-the-book the digger wasp on iris and damsel fly on lily which have been thoughtfully placed side-by-side.

After this feast in form and light, one would like to neglect faultfinding altogether. But there is one aspect of the book that bothers: Several of the plates are badly scratched and marred. An ancient-looking Mount Rainier is the best, or worst, example. This may be the fault of the engravers. Or perhaps it is inevitable in an anthology spanning decades; or admissable in a historic context: Nobody complains at Brady's scratches.

When the reader-viewer puts this book down, it is not with the sensation of sensory zapping that comes with many of the current exhibit-format books. Rather, I felt like I had just shared the distilled visions of a most broadly experienced, perceptually expressive naturalist. And that, in fact, is what had happened.

Robert M. Pyle, a naturalist and free-lance resource communicator, is working on his doctoral degree at Yale University.

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Faces of the Wilderness by Harvey Broome, foreword by William O. Douglas *(Mountain Press with the Wilderness Society, Missoula, Mont., 1972; 271 pp., illus., $7.95).*

REVIEWED BY DOUGLAS H. STRONG

THIS UNUSUAL BOOK, in the tradition of Thoreau's *Walden,* is a personal account of the experiences of Harvey Broome in wilderness areas throughout the United States between 1938 and 1965. At a time when professional ecologists and political activists are flooding the market with solemn reports of environmental studies, it is refreshing to find a nontechnical work written by a layman who simply relates in a quiet, compelling way what wilderness has meant to him.

Harvey Broome grew up in the shadow of the Great Smoky Mountains where he learned at an early age to appreciate the beauty and allure of primordial landscapes. A founder (1935) and major contributor to the Wilderness Society, Broome, with his wife Anne, joined Olaus Murie, Howard Zahniser, George Marshall, and other members of the council of the society on a long succession of annual field trips into wilderness areas. These excursions began in 1946, and Broome's record of them, kept in journal form at the time of each trip, constitutes the heart of the book.

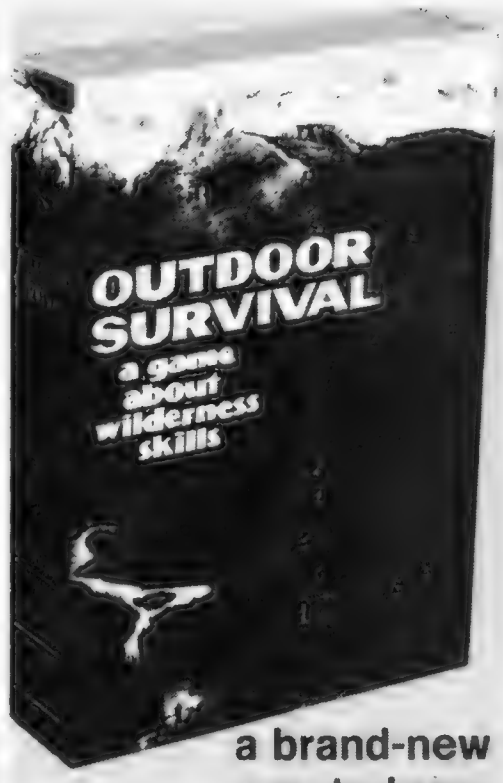
Unqualified praise for *Faces of the Wilderness* may be withheld by some readers because the author lacks the expertise of a trained naturalist, develops no central theme, and refrains from taking a strong stand on environmental issues. But perhaps it is these very features—or lack of them—that give the book peculiar charm. It is a rich, personal account written by a sensitive observer. Broome relates how he felt and what he thought, as for example, when he watched the approach of a sleet storm on a Colorado mountain peak, walked along the shifting sands of the Oregon Dunes, or searched for a lost companion in the rugged Big Horn Crags of Idaho.

Faces of the Wilderness gave this reviewer a new understanding of the diversity of the American wilderness and of the fact that each area has its own qualities and its own very special attractions. Broome had an unusual talent for appreciating this diversity and for identifying the essential character of each place he visited, whether it was the Okefenokee swamp, the badlands of the Dakotas, Mount McKinley, Washington's Olympic Beach, or the canoe country of northern Minnesota. They all entranced and moved him in some special way, and from his experiences we sense unmistakably the value of wilderness, the need to save the few areas left that can be saved, and the rejuvenation that can be experienced by those able and willing to sustain the rigors of wilderness and to accept it on its own terms.

This is a book to be greatly enjoyed by anyone who has had adventures on the trail—and to inspire and entice those who have not.

Douglas H. Strong *is a professor of history at California State University, San Diego, and author of* The Conservationists *and of* Trees—or Timber?: The Story of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Key to Deseret reader stories appearing on page 11. *Lower left:* "Come, James, and take a walk with me. Let us go to the hay field. I have seen the men cutting grass, and we may now see them loading the hay. I can turn over the new-cut grass with my hay fork and make good hay." *Lower right:* "Let us go to school. We will be late for school if we do not make haste. Are your brothers going to school today? No, my brothers James and John are very ill. They cannot go to school today." *Upper right:* "Do you see this cow? She is gentle and gives a great deal of good milk. She is standing near a large tree, and drives away the flies with her tail. Why does she stand by the tree? The leaves of the tree make a cool shade, and cows love the shade when the sun is hot. If there were no cows, we would not have much milk, or cheese, or butter. You must take good care of your cows, and give them fresh grass and hay, and build a good dry shed for them in winter. Some cows are taught to work, like the ox; but they should not be made to work."



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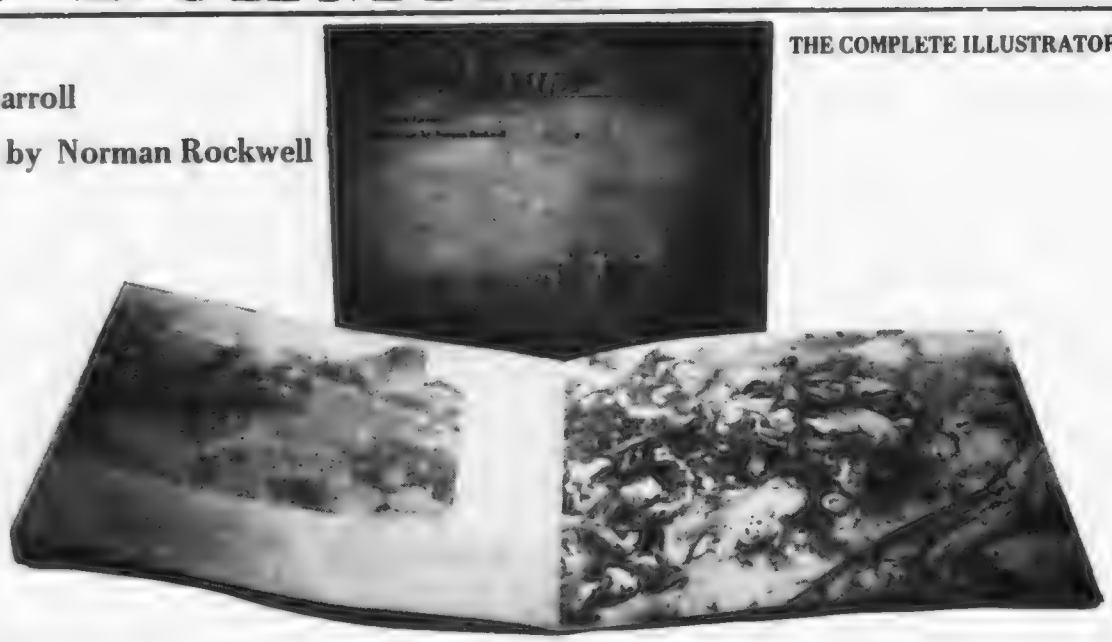

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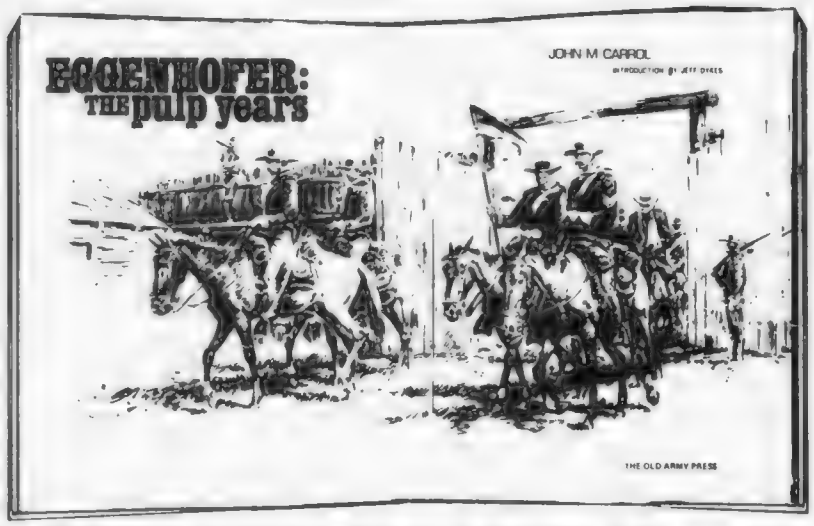

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Desert: The American Southwest by Ruth Kirk *(Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1973; 384 pp., illus., $8.95).*

REVIEWED BY
MARGARET Y. MARTINEZ

THIS THIRD VOLUME in "The Naturalist's America" series continues its predecessors' aim to "inform North Americans about the wildlife, plants, and geology of their continent," in this case the diverse desert life and landscape of southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. Ruth and Louis Kirk bring not only professional photographic skills to their book, but also intimate living acquaintance with two deserts where Mr. Kirk served as park naturalist. Familiarity with desert, however, does not dilute for Ruth Kirk the sense of shock and awe felt by those who, accustomed to the "damp greenness" of other regions, may initially view desert as "land that God never quite got around to finishing."

The book focuses mostly on the Sonoran Desert. Mrs. Kirk discusses "What is Desert" in terms of geology and the interrelations of water, wind, and temperature with the plants and animals that live there. Stating that "desert, as a land type, exemplifies as rich a set of plant–animal relationships as those of any other landscape," she is at her best in describing the diverse but successful techniques of survival—the physiological, anatomical, and behavioral adaptations of the inhabitants to the vagaries of desert conditions.

The book includes a chapter on tall cacti, symbol of the Sonoran Desert, and another on the incredible boojum trees. Two final chapters deal with man's relationship with deserts, from irrigation projects of the prehistoric Hohokam to tribes of recent history and the successive waves of Spaniards, Mexicans, and finally Yankees who have brought rapidly accelerating changes. Inasmuch as these changes are so often compounded with problems arising from "humid-land attitudes and laws," this book will help to clarify "what the desert is and how man can fit intelligently into its fabric."

Margaret Y. Martinez *is professor of biology at West Chester (Pa.) State College, and a member of the Western History Association.*

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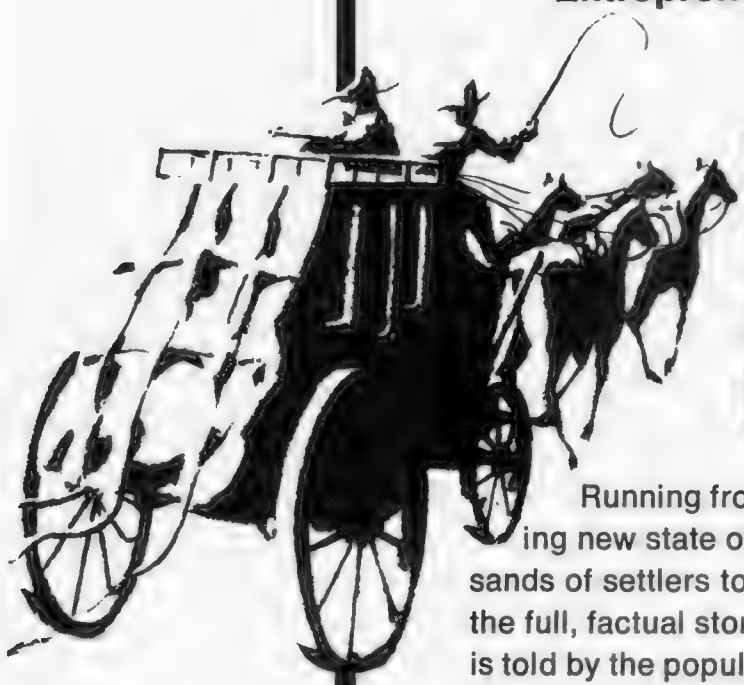

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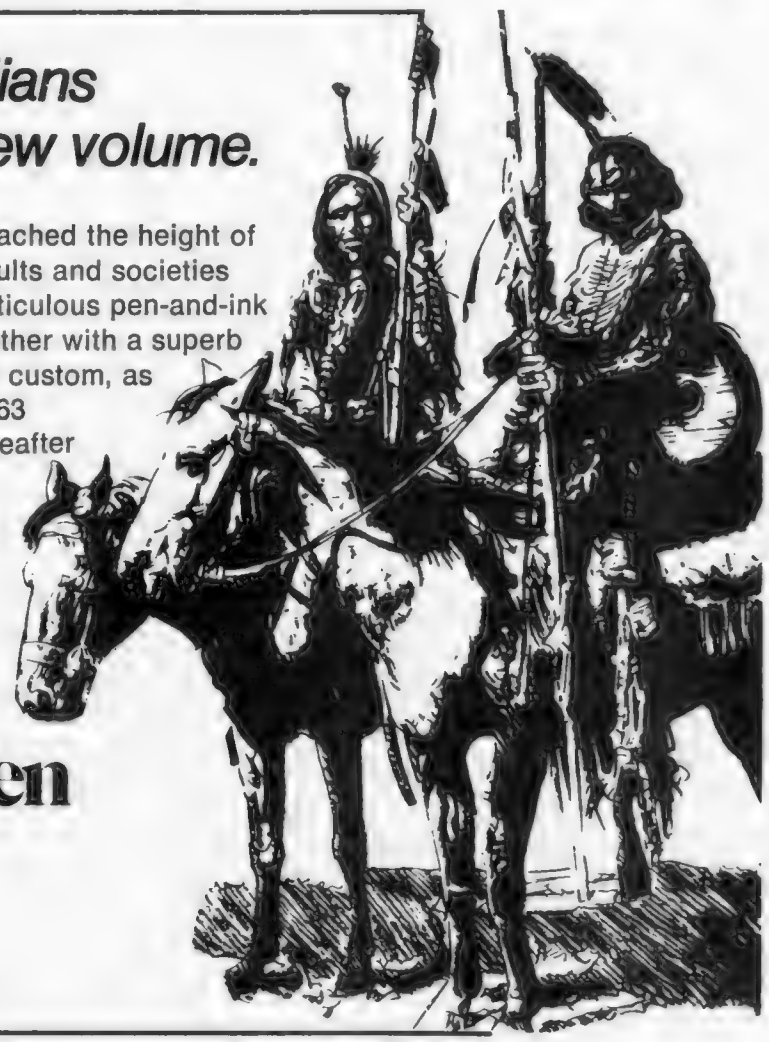

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Hawaii: An Uncommon History by Edward Joesting *(W. W. Norton, New York, 1972; 353 pp., illus., map, biblio., index, $10.95).*

REVIEWED BY BRETT MELENDY

RESIDENTS OF HAWAII and writers about these Pacific islands agree that there is something "uncommon" about them and about the people who have contributed to their fascinating past. Edward Joesting, in an obvious labor of love, has picked out some of the more colorful threads in the tapestry of Hawaiian history and examined them in careful detail. He has left to others the usual coverage of social, economic, and political events—and has instead chosen to focus upon individuals and episodes, using vignettes to give depth and additional insights to events chronicled briefly in other works. The result is a quick-moving book about the people of the Hawaiian islands.

While the author's stated aim is to emphasize that which is not common, the narrative follows the chronology of the monarchy, republic, and territory of Hawaii. The author delineates the origin of Polynesia, traces the first people's movement from distant islands to Hawaii, and relates their adaptation to a new environment. In 1778 Captain Cook brought the islands to the attention of the Western world, and later other Europeans followed him there. During this time of European exploration, the Hawaiian chiefs struggled for power. The unification of the islands by Kamehameha I is presented with interesting sidelights.

Joesting points out that the work of the missionaries remains embroiled in controversy. He notes that the missionaries did what they considered good and necessary for the Hawaiians' salvation, and sought to instill a Calvinistic morality. The white missionaries maintained that the Hawaiian life-style was worthless and evil. As a result the islanders lost "their own worth and self-respect."

With the arrival of European and American settlers, a Western economy developed. The author writes about individuals concerned with the beginning of mercantile enterprises and a sugar economy. He describes the impact that the discovery of California gold had upon the islands. He contends that while the Hawaiian monarchy was emotionally attached to the British empire, gold tied the islands tightly to the United States.

During much of the last half of the nineteenth century, France, Great Britain, and the United States competed for economic and territorial control. The book characterizes Chinese and Japanese immigration and the changes brought by these Asian cultures. The establishment of the Molokai leper colony, the terror of Hawaiians being sent there, and the dedication of Father Damien to the lepers is vividly portrayed.

Kaleidoscopic chapters about the days of King Kalakaua in the 1880s and the end of the monarchy under Queen Liliuokalani include sketches of Kalakaua's coronation, and the leaders of the new republic, Lorrin A. Thurston and Sanford B. Dole.

It is unfair to criticize an author for the book he did not write. However, this historian's one shortcoming is that too little is devoted to the twentieth century. That which is presented seems fragmented without much of a common thread to weave it together. Attention is given to the fears that swept Hawaii before and during World War I. The German firm, H. Hackfeld & Company was seized as enemy property, leading to the establishment of a very successful island corporation, American Factors. The visit of Jack London to Honolulu and Maui is well chronicled. The author also describes cross-Pacific flying, the Depression, and a class system based on racism. Joesting recounts the changes brought about by World War II and the contributions of the Hawaiian Japanese in the war zones of Europe and the Pacific. He also tells of the growth of unionism in the territory following the war and the movement for statehood.

Joesting is an effective narrator, and this book is highly recommended as a source of information about those who have contributed to the development of Hawaii and as a valuable supplement to standard works on Hawaiian history.

Brett Melendy *is author of* The Oriental Americans *(Twayne, 1972) and a professor of history and vice president for community colleges, University of Hawaii.*

Where the Wagon Led: One Man's Memories of the Cowboy's Life in the Old West by R. D. Symons *(Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1973; 343 pp., illus., glossary, $8.95).*

REVIEWED BY MILTON SHATRAW

OLD-TIME COWBOYS who have spent most of their lives punching cattle out West usually milestone their lives by recalling the horses they rode or owned at various times. R. D. Symons has lived up to that tradition in his book, an account of more than fifty years spent on the Canadian prairie as a cowpoke, rancher, and game protector.

Just before World War I, when he was sixteen, Symons emigrated to Saskatchewan from England. This background reveals itself in a pleasing British restraint and an easy-flowing style. The book is filled with anecdotes about neighbors and friends who are now part of the history of that high benchland. Symons tells of the big English cattle outfits that drifted north across the border as American ranges became more and more crowded. Soon this virgin Canadian rangeland also disappeared under a blizzard of homesteaders and dry-land grain farmers, leaving cattle ranching on a mammoth scale as just a memory.

The old struggle between nester and cattleman and their common war against Canada's often inhospitable climate is all here. There is mourning, too, for the horse that was replaced by the hated "stink wagon," for the countless acres of grazing sod turned "wrong-side up" by the plow, for the loss of the friendly, easy way of life practiced by the early settlers, and for the beauty and cleanliness of a once unspoiled land.

All of this could have become just another trite personal memoir. But Symons has dodged this trap by keeping himself in the background and letting the people and country tell the story. Although the book may be a little too detailed for some tastes, it is good reading from cover to cover and has the added bonus of beautiful line drawings by the author in the style of Charles Russell.

Milton Shatraw, *author of* Thrashin' Time, *spent his boyhood on a Montana cattle ranch at the turn of the century.*

American Space, the Centennial Years: 1865–1876 by John Brinckerhoff Jackson *(W. W. Norton, New York, 1972; 254 pp., illus., maps, biblio., index, $7.95).*

REVIEWED BY DWIGHT JENSEN

JOHN BRINCKERHOFF JACKSON sets out to show that the decade just after the Civil War was pivotal in the way Americans have shaped and used their environment. He makes his point. In that slightly elongated decade, 1865–76, there was formed "a new relationship between the American people and their landscape" that has affected us ever since. During this period:

1. City planning, building design, and de facto zoning began to take shape.

2. New concepts of space evolved. Workers began to live apart from their jobs. Machinery transformed town and country.

3. Southern plantations broke up. Sharecroppers and tenant farmers began to work small farms. Blacks congregated in their own communities, which eventually led to segregation and ghettoes.

4. Minnesota's Red River and California's Central valleys were broken by plow and farmed on corporate bases. Grasslands gave way to cultivation.

5. The railroads and the Homestead Act opened the West to settlement and to agriculture.

6. Parklands came into being. Land planning and some major aspects of "environmentalism" got their start.

Jackson, who seems to have studied the period thoroughly, says that Americans then began to regard their environment with less emotion and more practicality. Environmentalists — and probably those opposed to the dogma of environmentalists—will find this an informative and well written account of the origins of some modern problems.

Organizing his material coherently and writing clearly, Jackson carries the reader easily through those years and across this continent. The illustrations are appropriate, the index only perfunctory—but the book is more for reading than reference.

Dwight Jensen *is an Idaho journalist and broadcaster who has written about the past and present history of Idaho.*

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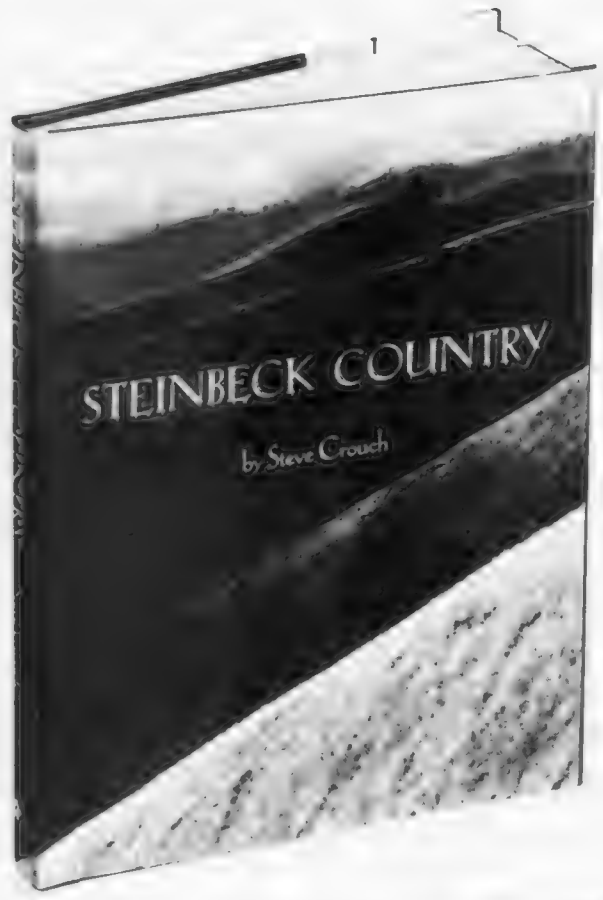

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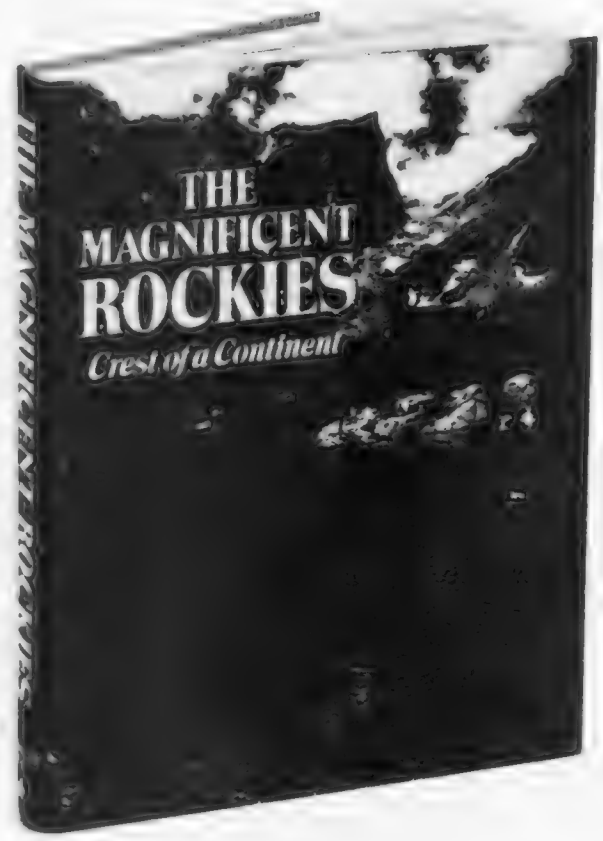

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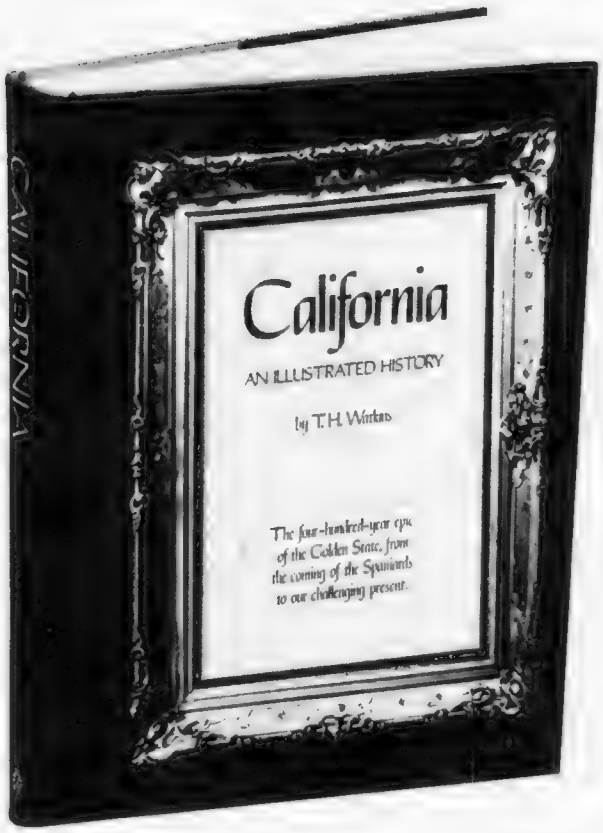
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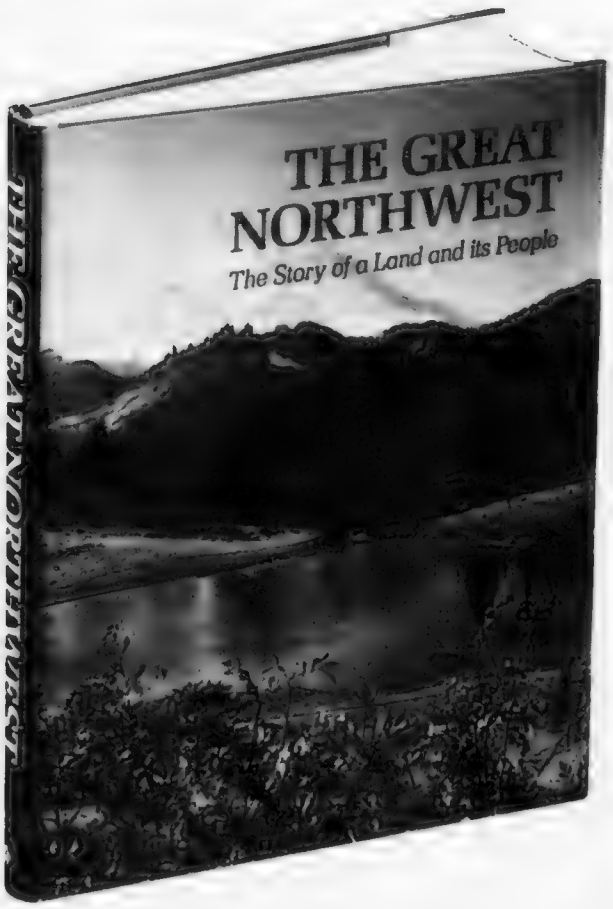

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BY ED HOLM

Chilkoot Pass: Then and Now by Archie Satterfield *(Alaska Northwest Publishing Co., Edmonds, Wash., 1973; 192 pp., illus., $3.95 paper).*

An entertaining little history of the Chilkoot Pass—"the meanest thirty-two miles in history"—and its role in the Klondike gold rush of 1898. Author Satterfield's account is generously illustrated with photographs by turn-of-the-century documentarians Asahel Curtis and E. A. Hegg, and contains a descriptive tour of the Chilkoot area as it exists today.

Remain To Be Seen: Historic California Houses Open to the Public by Elinor Richey *(Howell-North Books, Berkeley, Calif., 1973; 180 pp., illus., index, $8.50).*

An illustrated tour of 112 important California homes, ranging from Gen. Mariano Vallejo's historic Petaluma Adobe to William Randolph Hearst's architecturally staggering San Simeon.

The Gilcrease-Hargrett Catalogue of Imprints compiled by Lester Hargrett and G. P. Edwards with a foreword by John C. Ewers *(University of Oklahoma, Norman, and the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, 1972; 400 pp., illus., index, $20.00).*

This annotated bibliography of seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century printed materials in the collections of the Gilcrease Library will be of value to historians concerned with colonial history, the American Indian, and the American West.

Boots and Forceps by Willet J. Price as told to Hazel Heckman with drawings by Helen Hiatt *(Iowa State University, Ames, 1973; 181 pp., $5.95).*

A "large animal doctor" relates the story of his forty years of veterinary service on the ranchlands of Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Nevada. Liberal doses of humor, but some sad memories too.

Cactus Country by Edward Abbey and the editors of Time-Life Books *(Time-Life Books, New York, 1973; 184 pp., illus., map, biblio., index, $7.95).*

Yet another in Time-Life's "American Wilderness" series, this volume explores the fascinating ecology of the harsh desert area that covers 69,000 square miles in southern Arizona and adjacent northwestern Mexico. Heavily illustrated with color photographs.

Ether and Me, or "Just Relax" by Will Rogers with a preface by Will Rogers, Jr. *(Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, 1973; 64 pp., illus., notes, $6.50).*

This 1927 Will Rogers classic—a droll account of his gallstone operation—is the first volume in an ambitious program undertaken by the Will Rogers Memorial Commission and Oklahoma State University that will make available virtually all of the humorist's works, including his books, more than 3,000 newspaper articles, and scripts for some sixty radio shows.

Our Indian Wards by George W. Manypenny, with a foreword by Henry E. Fritz *(Da Capo Press, New York, 1972; 445 pp., $12.50).*

A facsimile reprint of an 1880 classic which marked the climax of more than a quarter-century of reform effort by a courageous former commissioner of Indian affairs.

The Seacoast of Bohemia by Franklin Walker *(Peregrine Smith, Santa Barbara, 1973; 127 pp., illus., $10.00).*

This affectionate history of Carmel, California, and the writers' colony that flourished there early in the century is an expanded version of a limited edition published in 1966. It provides interesting profiles—and rare, enchanting photographs—of such personalities as Jack London, George Sterling, Ambrose Bierce, Joaquin Miller, and Sinclair Lewis.

A LAST LAUGH FOR AMBROSE BIERCE

(Continued from page 47)

meal with Villa and his staff officers, denounced the rebel army as a band of thieves and assassins and announced he was abandoning Villa to join Carranza. Villa said he made a sign to one of his officers, Borunda, who quietly left the room. Meantime Villa told Bierce he was sorry for the decision he had made, gave the old man an *abrazo,* and Bierce left. A few minutes later Bierce and his *mozo* were heard riding off in the direction of the mountains. Suddenly shots rang out. Villa smiled and addressed himself to his bodyguard "Butcher" Fierro: "Let's see if that damned *gringo* tells his last joke to the buzzards on the mountain."

Biographer and historian Edward Larocque Tinker, who knew Villa during the Revolution and lived in Villa's military train, completely subscribes to Torres's account: "That this account is true," Tinker has written, "I have no doubt. As I have said, it comes to us from a trustworthy source, and every detail is in complete accord with the characters of both Villa and Bierce. . . . What I saw and heard persuaded me he (Villa) would think no more of killing a man than a housewife would of stepping on a cockroach."

Professor Braddy, who has spent years tracing Bierce's final footsteps, says he has not uncovered the slightest inkling of Bierce's fate. Braddy's travels into Mexico, interviews with former Villistas, with Villa's widow, with various soldiers-of-fortune who fought with Villa have yielded nothing. And, while the Texas professor says, "It is my conclusion that the spreading belief that Bierce died in Mexico rests at present on no substantial proof whatsoever and should thus be strongly opposed," he admits this much: "In the Revolution of that day, disappearances occurred often and usually without notice. Moreover, Bierce seemed bent on self-destruction and openly said so. My present thought is that Villa did not murder this Americano, whose disappearance must rank among the greatest of mysteries. I rather think that age and alcohol together with likely privation and possible exposure to the elements account for his end."

Edward H. Smith, in the book *Mysteries of the Missing* (1927), says, "My own guess is that he started out to fight battles and shoulder hardships as he had done as a boy, somehow believing that a tough spirit would carry him through. Wounded or stricken with disease, he probably lay down in some pesthouse of a hospital, some troop train filled with other stricken men. Or he may have crawled off to some waterhole and died, with nothing more articulate than the winds and the stars for witness."

In his *The Mauve Decade* (1926), Thomas Beer wrote, "If it is true that they shot him against a wall in Mexico, some literate member of the firing-party heard a last pungency and the old man buttoned his coat and faced the rifles, smiling."

And Richard O'Connor, Bierce's latest biographer, supports the idea of the old man's having the last laugh. In a letter to this writer, O'Connor wrote, "I like to think that Bierce ended up in some Andean village, laughing his head off at having completed his most successful hoax."

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

The author is especially indebted to Prof. Haldeen Braddy of the Department of English, University of Texas at El Paso, who has done an immense amount of spadework on the Bierce disappearance mystery. Dr. Braddy personally knew two of Bierce's early biographers, Adolphe Danziger and Walter Neale, and during his several travels into Mexico questioned a host of former Villistas, soldiers of fortune, and others on the matter of Bierce's last days alive. Special gratitude is also due for helpful comments from Richard O'Connor, Bierce's most recent biographer and, in the author's opinion, the best one.

Published sources consulted, in addition to Bierce's own works, include Allen Churchill's *They Never Came Back* (1960), Paul Fatout's *The Devil's Lexicographer* (1951), C. Hartley Grattan's *Bitter Bierce* (1929), H. L. Mencken's *A Mencken Chrestomathy* (1956), Edward H. Smith's *Mysteries of the Missing* (1927), Vincent Starrett's *Buried Caesars* (1923), W. A. Swanberg's *Citizen Hearst* (1961), and Robert A. Wiggin's *Ambrose Bierce* (1964).

Dale L. Walker, *director of the news bureau at the University of Texas at El Paso, is coauthor of* The Lost Revolutionary: A Biography of John Reed *(1967), and is author of* The Fiction of Jack London *(1972) and* C. L. Sonnichsen: Grassroots Historian *(1972). He has recently completed a biography of William O. "Buckey" O'Neill of Arizona.*

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